

The OSCE Summit in Astana

Expectations and Results

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Contents

1.	The Astana Summit: expectations and objectives	5
1.1.	Core intention: restoration of trust	5
1.2.	Russia's expectations and objectives	6
1.2.1.	Russia's expectations before Corfu	6
1.2.2.	Russia's objectives for Astana	8
1.3.	The USA's priorities for Astana	9
1.4.	The EU's priorities for Astana	11
1.5.	Kazakhstan's objectives for Astana	11
1.6.	Expectations of Astana: summary	12
2.	The OSCE Summit in Astana	13
2.1.	The results of Astana	13
2.2.	Results from the viewpoint of individual actors	20
2.2.1.	Russia: astonishing confidence	20
2.2.2.	The USA: return to the first dimension and conflict management	21
2.2.3.	The EU: return to the four original goal formulations	22
2.2.4.	Kazakhstan: increase in prestige but problematic domestic policies	22
2.3.	Implications for Lithuania's Chairmanship in 2011	25
3.	Conclusions and options	26

The OSCE Summit in Astana

Expectations and Results

The OSCE Summit in Astana in December 2010 was a novelty in several respects. It was the first OSCE Summit to be held for eleven years and the first to take place in a Central Asian state or a CIS member state. In procedural terms, the Astana Summit was the culmination of the OSCE Corfu Process, a new, temporary dialogue format for European security issues. This dialogue, in contrast to the OSCE reform discussions in 2005/2006, was not confrontational but astonishingly constructive in some of its phases.

The expectations regarding what Astana might achieve were correspondingly high. For one thing, the OSCE's normative *acquis* was to be reiterated, and for another, the Organization's capacity to take action was to be underpinned with a substantial work programme. The fact that the first of these aims was achieved with the Astana Commemorative Declaration, while the Astana Framework for Action foundered on differences of opinion regarding regional conflicts, is the reason for the widely divergent assessments of the Astana Summit.

The objectives of this paper are, *firstly*, to examine what the most important OSCE actors expected from the Astana Summit, and *secondly* to analyse their assessment of the Summit's results. On this basis, conclusions will be drawn and alternatives for action highlighted.

1. The Astana Summit: expectations and objectives

1.1. Core intention: restoration of trust

The restoration of trust between the Western states and Russia was the guiding theme throughout the entire Corfu Process and one of the Astana Summit's overriding goals. In her invitation to the informal meeting of OSCE Foreign Ministers on Corfu in June 2009, the Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis had already spoken with a directness untypical of the OSCE of "a serious decline of trust among the participating States" and made the restoration of trust her number one priority for the discussions held on Corfu.¹ This wish was shared by most of the participating States and later became the general objective for Astana.

1 Permanent Mission of Greece to the OSCE, *Informal OSCE Ministerial Meeting, Corfu, 27–28 June 2009. The Present and Future of European Security: Reconfirm – Review – Renovate. Launching the Corfu Process. Reflection Paper by the Chairmanship-in-Office*, CIO.GAL/76/09, 17 June 2009.

1.2. Russia's expectations and objectives

The theme of building trust in Europe had also been addressed by Dmitry Medvedev, the Russian President, in his speech in Berlin in June 2008. He did this against a backdrop of grave deficiencies in security co-operation between Russia and the West. Their differences were so fundamental that they pervaded almost all thematic areas, from military policy issues to regional conflicts and, ultimately, the dispute about basic democratic values.

In this situation, the European Security Treaty proposed by President Medvedev in Berlin in June 2008 ("drafting and signing a legally binding treaty on European security in which the organisations currently working in the Euro-Atlantic area could become parties"²) was intended as an invitation to return to the negotiating table. This initiative was not underpinned with any specific content, however. It was nevertheless put to use as a vehicle for resuming the European security dialogue after the shock of the Georgia conflict in August 2008.

The Corfu Process as a new discussion format embodied the Western states' reaction to Russia's treaty initiative and wish for dialogue. In the process, the USA and other participants made it clear that this dialogue would have to be held within the framework and value-related context of the OSCE, and would therefore have to cover all dimensions of European security:

*"This dialogue should take place primarily at the OSCE, and be structured to reflect the OSCE's comprehensive definition of security, with its political-military, economic, and human dimensions."*³

This means that the proposal for a European Security Treaty was not included directly in the discussions. It had, however, proven its worth as a suitable instrument for reopening the dialogue process.

1.2.1. Russia's expectations before Corfu

In the Corfu and Astana processes, the Russian side allowed its own political initiative to be wrested from its grasp – insofar as the initiative was ever really its own. The initial draft text for a European Security Treaty (EST), which was not submitted until November 2009, 17 months after President Medvedev's speech in Berlin, could not be regarded as an appropriate basis in any case. Indeed, the Russian side referred to it somewhat reservedly in Astana.

The placement of the European security talks within the framework of the OSCE contradicted Russian notions to a lesser extent than is generally supposed. Even before the informal Corfu meeting in June 2009, Presidents Medvedev and Obama had expressed their preference for a comprehensive dialogue to be conducted within two possible frameworks: the OSCE and the NATO-Russia Council ("The OSCE is one of the key multilateral venues for this dialogue, as is the NATO-Russia

2 Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the OSCE, *President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev's Speech at Meeting with German Political, Parliamentary and Civic Leaders, Berlin, 5 June 2008*, SEC.DEL/85/08, 9 June 2008.

3 United States Mission to the OSCE, *European Security and the Corfu Ministerial: U.S. Food-for-Thought Paper*, PC.DEL/510/09, 25 June 2009.

Council.”⁴). Western delegation members in Vienna confirm Russia’s open-mindedness towards the OSCE’s broad agenda, in which Russia even showed itself willing to discuss human-dimension issues. Admittedly, Russia’s positions in this area were – as so often – not necessarily consistent and coherent, also in the context of Corfu and Astana. Explanations uttered by the Russian delegation’s leadership in Vienna occasionally gave impressions that were completely different from those given by the leading representatives from Moscow.

Foreign policy objectives

The view from Moscow immediately before the informal meeting of OSCE Foreign Ministers on Corfu was that the Russian side regarded this as “an important milestone in the implementation of ideas from President Dmitry Medvedev regarding the conclusion of a treaty on European security”.⁵ In this way, Moscow was pursuing four foreign policy objectives: *firstly*, the establishment of principles for inter-state relationships under international law; *secondly*, the formulation of basic principles for arms control, confidence building and restrained but, nevertheless, adequate military doctrines; *thirdly*, the formulation of unified principles for conflict resolution and of standardized rules for handling crisis situations; and *fourthly*, the co-ordination of collaboration between states and organizations in dealing with new threats and challenges. (ibid.)

Connecting link with domestic intentions

In terms of domestic policy, President Medvedev’s initiative was tied in with the objective of Russia’s opening towards Europe. As far as Western perceptions were concerned, this aspect always occupied second place behind security policy aspects, especially in the context of the Georgia crisis.

But this was a signal in favour of co-operation which contrasted starkly with the dramatic gesture made by the then President Vladimir Putin, who, in his well-known speech in Munich (February 2007), had returned to the hypothesis of unilateralist Russian political traditions (“Russia [...] has practically always used the privilege to carry out an independent foreign policy.”⁶) – a declaration that Russia reinforced by recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2008. The description of the OSCE as “a vulgar instrument designed to promote the foreign policy interests of one or a group of countries” (ibid.) became anchored in the consciousness of Western partners.

Shaped by these perceptions, Western opinion mostly presumed that behind President Medvedev’s initiative lay an attempt by Russia to weaken NATO. Influential circles in Moscow may well have intentions of this kind. But President Medvedev himself had given many declarations of principle on human rights and on the significance of a common area of values and the rule of law for a Russia that stood firmly behind European traditions. An idea which recurs frequently in his expositions is the reference to necessary developments in civil society in Russia. The

4 The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, *Joint Statement by President Dmitry Medvedev of the Russia and President Barack Obama of the United States of America*, Washington, 1 April 2009, at: <http://www.armscontrol.org/node/3611>.

5 Vladimir Voronkov, *The European Security Treaty after Corfu*, SEC.DEL/242/09, 14 September 2009.

6 Vladimir Putin, *Speech at the 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy*, 10 February 2007, at: http://www.securityconference.de/archive/konferenzen/2007/index.php?menu_2007=&menu_konferenzen=&sprache=en&.

picture of Russia which he outlined in the aforementioned Berlin speech had as its background the “European civilization in its entirety”, whose problems would be solved only with a common “sense of identity and organic unity between all of its integral components, including the Russian Federation”. The core of these statements is the message that “Russia has laid the foundations of a state that is completely compatible with the rest of Europe.”⁷

1.2.2. Russia’s objectives for Astana

In his speech in Berlin, President Medvedev had also suggested a European summit to open negotiations for his security treaty: “I also propose that we consider holding a general European summit to start the process of drafting this agreement.” (ibid.) This proposal, still unspecified at first, was taken up a quarter of a year later during the French mediation of the Georgia crisis in October and November 2008 when President Nicolas Sarkozy suggested a special OSCE summit on European security issues in 2009.⁸

In early 2009, President Medvedev was still referring only cautiously to the OSCE as a platform for a summit meeting. The OSCE, he observed sceptically, dealt with partial, and sometimes peripheral, security questions.⁹ In view of Kazakhstan’s exceptionally strong advocacy of an OSCE summit in Astana, however, Russia had little scope for speaking out openly against such a summit – this would have meant that Russia no longer had its alliance partner Kazakhstan under control. Accordingly, a statement on this subject matter made by the leader of the Russian delegation at the special meeting of the Permanent Council in June 2010 was strikingly positive. The scheduling of the summit was even described in the statement as “a historic opportunity”.¹⁰

Emphasis on military policy and conflict management

Russia summarized its general objective for Astana with the formula that “long-term objectives should be identified in the declaration and impetus provided for the adoption of urgent measures”. (ibid.)

As for the subject matter to be discussed in a possible summit agenda, Russia placed special emphasis on, above all, politico-military issues (arms control and confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMS), in particular the CFE Treaty and the modernization of the 1999 Vienna Document, as well as transnational threats) and of course its own proposal for a European Security Treaty. In doing so, Russia explicitly underlined its desire to circumvent problems of conflict prevention and conflict resolution as possible bones of contention at the summit. (“[W]e urge

7 Dmitry Medvedev, 5 June 2008, cited above (Note 2).

8 Nicolas Sarkozy, *Speech at World Policy Conference, Evian, 8 October 2008*, at: www.elysee.fr/download/?mode=press&filename=08.10_World_Policy_Conference_en_anglais.pdf, and: Permanent Representation of France to the OSCE/French EU Presidency, *Main results of the EU-Russia Summit, 18 November 2008*, SEC.DEL/299/08.

9 Dmitry Medvedev, *Speech at Helsinki University and Answers to Questions from Audience, Helsinki, 20 April 2009*, at: www.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2009/04/20/1919_type82912type82914type84779_215323.shtml.

10 Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the OSCE, *Statement by Mr. Anvar Azimov, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation at the Special Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council, 25 June 2010, Regarding a possible OSCE summit*, PC.DEL/645/10, 25 June 2010.

that this issue not be turned into a ‘bone of contention’, as has happened in the past on many occasions.” (ibid.) Closer reading of the Russian statements also reveals references to the second and third dimensions of the OSCE:

“We believe it necessary to reaffirm, at the level of Heads of State, commitments under all the fundamental CSCE/OSCE documents, primarily the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris for a New Europe and the Charter for European Security.” (ibid.)

International legal personality of the OSCE

Russia again insisted on a clearer definition of the OSCE’s role within the system of international security structures and on the transformation of the OSCE into a full-fledged international organization with a charter and other founding documents with which guiding rules would have to be established for its decision-making bodies.¹¹

1.3. The USA’s priorities for Astana

The starting signal for the preparation of a possible summit was given in April 2010 in the form of a bilateral declaration by Presidents Barack Obama and Nursultan Nazarbayev concerning the elaboration of a substantive agenda for such a summit:

“The Presidents discussed Kazakhstan’s OSCE Chairmanship and its proposal to host an OSCE Summit. They noted positively Kazakhstan’s initiative to promote greater OSCE engagement in Afghanistan, to hold a Review Conference in Kazakhstan on Implementation of Commitments in the Human Dimension, and to advance the Corfu process. The United States and Kazakhstan agreed to work on developing a substantive agenda for an OSCE Summit.”¹²

Although this did not (yet) signify the USA’s agreement to an OSCE summit, it did signal its consent to preparations for such an event. In this way, the scepticism about the usefulness of such a summit meeting, which had been widespread until then, was allayed and/or ignored.¹³ The USA had given its consent to positive discussions about a possible OSCE summit in the context of its broader co-operation with Kazakhstan, which encompasses, *inter alia*, nuclear disarmament, economic relationships and energy partnership, and intensified efforts in Afghanistan.¹⁴

11 Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the OSCE, *In response to the statement by Mr. Kanat Saudabayev, Statement by Mr. Anvar Azimov*, PC.DEL/1086/10, 15 November 2010.

12 The statement was made on the sidelines of the Nuclear Security Summit, Washington, DC, 12 April 2010. See: Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Washington, *Presidents Nazarbayev and Obama Meet in Washington, D.C. to Discuss Kazakh-U.S. Strategic Partnership*, 12 April 2010, at: <http://www.kazakhembus.com/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=349&cntnt01origid=15&cntnt01returnid=201>.

13 The feasibility and usefulness of formats such as “harvesting summit”, “launching summit”, or an “assessment”, “anniversary”, “unification” or “reconciliation summit”) was called into question most vividly by, for example, the Norwegian delegation – all of the above were profiles suggested for the summit in the course of the Corfu Process. See: Permanent Delegation of Norway to the OSCE, *Statement on a Proposed OSCE Summit*, PC.DEL/641/10, 25 June 2010.

14 Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Washington, 12 April 2010, cited above (Note 12).

The USA argued the case for a substantive summit (“a summit should make a significant contribution”) with a focused agenda and a strategic vision.¹⁵ At the same time, they regarded the summit as a starting point for further debates rather than a conclusive event – “the Astana Summit, in our view, is a start, not an end.”¹⁶

In the initial discussion about the summit, the USA proposed three thematic areas: *firstly*, the OSCE’s role in Central Asia and for Afghanistan; *secondly*, the improvement of existing OSCE instruments in respect of the key points of the 1999 Vienna Document, CFE Treaty, ODIHR, crisis management, solving the protracted conflicts, and re-establishing a long-term presence in Georgia; *thirdly*, the development of new mechanisms and commitments for the OSCE, above all in the area of conflict management.¹⁷ In the process, the USA, above all in the context of the second Kirghiz crisis (June 2010), perceived the summit discussions in conjunction with strengthened OSCE crisis management, especially in the Central Asian region and, beyond that, in connection with Afghanistan.¹⁸ In September 2010 they made the preparations for Astana more precise as regards subject matters by circulating a list of two dozen minimum expectations for the plan of action they envisaged.¹⁹ In the immediate run-up to the summit, they again raised the issue of improving the OSCE’s conflict prevention and crisis management capacities.²⁰ The three priorities of the USA that Hillary Clinton referred to in Astana again related to Afghanistan, crisis management and conflict prevention, and human rights and fundamental freedoms.²¹

The thematization of OSCE activities in the context of Afghanistan was a matter of special significance for the USA. The background, after all, comprises the strategic precautions being taken for the country’s stabilization by 2014 so that the withdrawal of troops envisaged for that year can be ensured. For years, the USA has been striving for improved interaction between the OSCE, the Central Asian states and the OSCE Asian Partner for Co-operation Afghanistan. Hillary Clinton repeated her call for greater regional commitment by the OSCE in selected areas such as border security and combating illicit trafficking. As a general principle she declared: “Afghanistan is just one conflict where the OSCE can and should play an expanded role.” (ibid.)

15 United States Mission to the OSCE, *Response to Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, H.E. Konstantin Zhigalov, on an OSCE Summit*, PC.DEL/638/10, 25 June 2010.

16 United States Mission to the OSCE, *Response to Kazakhstani Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev, as delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly*, PC.DEL/1084/10, 15 November 2010.

17 United States Mission to the OSCE, *Agenda for the Next OSCE Summit*, PC.DEL/402/10, 14 May 2010.

18 United States Mission to the OSCE, 25 June 2010, cited above (Note 15).

19 United States Mission to the OSCE, *OSCE Astana Summit Action Plan Minimal Key Elements*, PC.DEL/913/10, 14 September 2010.

20 United States Mission to the OSCE, 15 November 2010, cited above (Note 16).

21 US Department of State, *Remarks. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton at OSCE Summit*, SUM.DEL/12/10, 1 December 2010.

1.4. The EU's priorities for Astana

The group of EU member countries, too, had based its expectations of a possible summit on a substantive agenda and a plan of action. The restoration of trust and confidence was formulated as the overriding goal, and a reinforced security community from Vancouver to Vladivostok and its development into an 'OSCE+' as the strategic vision.²²

The summit was intended to strengthen the OSCE in four high-priority areas: *firstly* in conflict management, *secondly* in the human dimension, *thirdly* in conventional arms control with the CFE process and the modernization of the 1999 Vienna Document as its key elements, and *fourthly* the combating of transnational threats, including the threats coming from Afghanistan and an examination of the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century (Maastricht 2003). Specific expectations were tied to concrete progress in the protracted conflicts, which was described as the main litmus test for goodwill.²³

1.5. Kazakhstan's objectives for Astana

Like the OSCE Chairmanship itself, the realization of a summit meeting during its period at the helm of the Organization, and in Astana itself, was a top-ranking matter of prestige and kudos for Kazakhstan. In October 2009 at an Ambassadors' Retreat in Krems (Austria), on the eve of its country's assumption of the Chairmanship, the Kazakhstani delegation was already placing special emphasis on the formulation of preparing for a summit in Astana.

In Krems, the Kazakhstani delegation formulated the building of renewed trust between the participating States as the goal for a summit meeting and proposed four main points of emphasis: *firstly*, the reconfirmation of OSCE norms and principles; *secondly*, issues related to European security such as new cross-dimensional and cross-border threats and challenges, including security in Afghanistan; *thirdly*, key issues of security in Europe such as arms control, including the CFE Treaty, and confidence- and security-building measures for, among other things, energy security, protracted conflicts and conflict prevention; and *fourthly*, an examination and strengthening of the OSCE's instruments in all three dimensions, especially in crucial areas of the human dimension.²⁴

The Kazakh side justified the necessity of a summit meeting by arguing that the Corfu Process would have to be continued "in a way which will facilitate a shift from consultations to negotiations on substance". In making this point it set its sights on a "kick-off summit": "[T]he intention is not to finalize the job done [...] but to breathe

22 Permanent Mission of Spain to the OSCE, *Proposed OSCE Summit*, PC.DEL/539/10, 15 June 2010.

23 Ibid. See also: Permanent Mission of Spain to the OSCE, *Spanish Presidency of the European Union: EU statement on the proposed OSCE Summit*, PC.DEL/639/10, 25 June 2010.

24 Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the OSCE, *Speaking Points of Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov "On the OSCE Summit", Krems Ambassadorial Retreat, 31 October 2009*, PC.DEL/902/09, 9 November 2009.

fresh life into the Helsinki process.”²⁵ In July 2010, when the Kazakhstani Chairmanship reached its halfway point, it formulated the possible goals for a summit as follows:

1. *Core principles of Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security* – affirmation and possible updating of the OSCE’s norms and commitments as basic principles of Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security;
2. *Resolving existing problems in the OSCE area* – solving the existing problems in the OSCE area with, among other things, arms control and CSBMs and, especially, progress in the CFE process and the modernization of the 1999 Vienna Document, plus the settlement of the protracted conflicts;
3. *Tackling common threats together* – combating transnational threats by, among other things, striving for stability in Afghanistan and rectifying existing problems in the human dimension and in the field of tolerance and non-discrimination;
4. *Strengthening the OSCE toolbox* – strengthening the OSCE’s range of instruments, also by establishing a legal framework for the OSCE and by strengthening its capacities in conflict management.²⁶

In summing up the preparatory discussions, the Kazakhstani Chairmanship described the firm anchoring of the vision of a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community in the summit’s concluding documents as “the core objective of the OSCE Summit, to be reflected in the final document(s)”.²⁷

1.6. Expectations of Astana: summary

Throughout the entire Corfu Process it proved impossible, despite dozens of proposals and position papers, to reach any consensus of any kind on any issue, however minor. The intention now, however, was to achieve precisely this in just a few weeks’ of summit preparations – and this was very nearly achieved in Astana, albeit with one crucial exception (cf. 2). At Astana, the first priority for the USA and the EU member countries was to adopt a substantive schedule of action. This applied far less to Russia; Moscow would also have been satisfied with a solemn declaration and a number of basic pointers for action. The core expectation for Kazakhstan was to hold a prestigious summit meeting in Astana, its capital city.

From a Western point of view, then, a successful summit requires a qualitative leap as far as the subject matter is concerned – something that has failed to materialize in the recent history of the OSCE. It is therefore this great distance between the starting level and the expectation level that explains the widespread

25 Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the OSCE, *Statement by Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov*, PC.DEL/901/09, 9 November 2009.

26 Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the OSCE, *Kazakhstan OSCE Chairmanship Perception Paper. OSCE Summit 2010*, CIO.GAL/118/10, 5 July 2010.

27 Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the OSCE, *OSCE Chairmanship Perception Paper “Towards a ‘Framework for Action on a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian Security Community’”*, CIO.GAL/167/10, 24 September 2010.

scepticism about the summit that still prevailed in a number of European capital cities, and by no means only in London, in the early summer of 2010. The fact that a decision was nevertheless made to hold the summit can be attributed primarily to the USA's decision to support it, with even the greatest sceptics in the European camp then following suit.

Even though the expectations of the USA and the EU member countries contained considerable inbuilt disillusionment potential from the outset, this was far less applicable to Russia because its horizon of expectations was more modest. There was also the fact that a highly successful summit meeting would have fortified the OSCE, not an outcome that would necessarily have conformed to the Russian elites' current love-hate relationship with that organization.

Another important divergence in expectations between Russia and the Western states concerned protracted conflicts. Although the issue of conflict management by the OSCE, including cases where protracted conflicts remained unresolved, occupied pride of place in the expectations of both the USA and the EU member countries, Russia warned explicitly against thematizing this issue. The fact that in Astana this constellation of topics would then develop the explosive force that prevented the Astana Framework for Action from being adopted was certainly far less discernible during the summit's preparations than it has since become with hindsight.

2. The OSCE Summit in Astana

As a result of the Corfu Process, an OSCE summit was held in Astana – the first such summit meeting since Istanbul in 1999. The perceptions and assessments of this summit have been extremely contradictory. For the OSCE community itself, the Astana summit in Kazakhstan was redolent with symbols of acknowledgement – for the Organization and its values and in particular for the Eastern European and Central Asian participating States. For the first time, moreover, an Asian state left its distinctive mark on the European security agenda. As for the details, observers commented positively on the fact that the USA, the EU member countries and Russia had negotiated with each other trilaterally in a new way in preparation for Astana. “We are capable of dialogue”, proclaimed delegation sources, even though the OSCE is not an organization of like-minded member states such as NATO and the EU.

Outside the OSCE, on the other hand, the Summit was barely noticed. The media reaction was not only sparse, but also negative. In the participating States' capital cities, too, interest in the OSCE and confidence in its ability to survive decreased rather than increased. After Astana, some observers therefore predicted a further marginalization of the OSCE.

2.1. The results of Astana

For the OSCE, the Astana Summit represented a number of 'firsts'. It was the Organization's first summit to be held in the Asian part of the OSCE area. It was the first summit held in a member state of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and the Organisation of

Islamic Cooperation (OIC), as well as being the first in a predominantly Muslim state.

First time since Porto in 2002, a political declaration – the Astana Commemorative Declaration “Towards a Security Community” (SUM.DOC/1/10/Corr.1) – was adopted. A detailed work programme, the Astana Framework for Action “Shared Priorities and Objectives” (CIO.GAL/179/10/Rev.5), was negotiated and approved for resolution – with the exception of the paragraph “On specific conflicts: Georgia, Moldova, Conflict dealt with by the Minsk Group”. It then proved impossible to get adopted, however, because of the irreconcilable differences regarding these regional conflicts – even though this had generally been regarded as the real substantive result of the summit. Selected points from the Astana Framework for Action were included in the plans for the Lithuanian Chairmanship in 2011, but without being mentioned explicitly.²⁸

The results of Astana are interpreted in very different ways. The comments range from appreciation to disappointment. Canada, for example, declared that the Summit was “indeed historic” and that it “helped build trust within our vast OSCE region”. The Commemorative Declaration was “a modest first step towards a framework for action in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area”.²⁹ Other delegations took a far more critical view of Astana. The Romanian delegation called the failure to adopt the framework for action “an important missed opportunity” and declared that the participating States were “far from meeting the objective of restoring trust and confidence.”³⁰ The Czech Delegation took the view that “[t]his opportunity was lost. So was the relevance of the OSCE.”³¹

Novelty: European security agenda shaped by Asia

The holding of an OSCE summit in Astana, like the Kazakhstani Chairmanship itself in 2010, reflects the Organization’s acknowledgement of the global shifting of weight towards Asia. This relates in particular to the significance of Central Asia, Afghanistan and (even though it was not mentioned in this context) Pakistan for European and global security.

In 2010, Kazakhstan became the first Asian state to be in a position to stamp its own character on the European security agenda. With its Chairmanship of the OSCE, Kazakhstan showed itself to be an assertive actor in the field of security policy. During its lengthy application campaign for the OSCE Chairmanship, Kazakhstan had already demonstrated political stamina and, despite insistent demands by its Western partners, hardly suffered any domestic or foreign political damage as a result of its selection.

28 Permanent Mission of the Republic of Lithuania to the OSCE, *2011 Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship Work Programme*, CIO.GAL/4/11/Rev.1, 12 January 2011.

29 Delegation of Canada, *Interpretative Statement under Paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the Rules of Procedure of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Attachment 2 to the Astana Commemorative Declaration “Towards a Security Community”*, SUM.DOC/1/10/Corr.1, 3 December 2010.

30 Delegation of Romania to the OSCE, *Interpretative Statement under Paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the Rules of Procedure of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Attachment 4 to the Astana Commemorative Declaration “Towards a Security Community”*, SUM.DOC/1/10/Corr.1, 3 December 2010.

31 Delegation of the Czech Republic to the OSCE, *Interpretative Statement under Paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the Rules of Procedure of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Attachment 5 to the Astana Commemorative Declaration “Towards a Security Community”*, SUM.DOC/1/10/Corr.1, 3 December 2010.

Kazakhstan is trying to position itself between the major actors of Europe and Asia with its – as it is called there – multivectoral foreign policy. In the OSCE it succeeded in this aim creditably in 2010. In its role as Chair-in-Office and with its summit initiative, something that hardly any other participating State would be capable of at present, Kazakhstan channelled the discussion in the OSCE to a considerable degree while simultaneously giving clear expression to the OSCE's Asian dimension.

Symbolic acknowledgement of the OSCE and Europe – with no response

The Astana Summit stands for a joint symbolic acknowledgement by the OSCE participating States of the Organization and of common responsibility for the continent's security. Eschewing a summit would also have meant dispensing with this symbolism. Most of the participating States' Heads of State or Government underlined the point with their presence. It is noticeable, however, that all the post-Yugoslavian states and – with the exception of Moldova and Uzbekistan – all the post-Soviet states had front-ranking representation while the representation of several Western states was lower-ranking (USA, United Kingdom, Canada, Poland, Portugal, Czech Republic, Sweden, Switzerland). The EU was represented by the President of the European Council as well as by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Very little attention was paid to the Astana Summit by the general public or by the elites in Europe's capital cities. Soon after Astana had finished, even Heads of State or Government who had been personally involved in the summit were hardly referring to the OSCE any more in their public statements. Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was the only politician at the 47th Munich Security Conference two months after Astana (in February 2011) who spoke about the value of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. In Western assessments of the relevant issues, the OSCE was no longer mentioned. German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel made only a general reference to the security co-operation that was necessary over and above NATO and the EU.³² US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton spoke about the key task of modernizing the (Western) European security architecture and "the necessary balance of forces and capabilities to meet our enduring commitment to Article Five" (mutual assistance if one party to the Treaty must be defended, North Atlantic Treaty, 1949) and the capacity for defending oneself against traditional and new threats.³³ The French Foreign Minister Michele Alliot-Marie talked about the expansion of Europe's own capacity for making contributions to peace and security.³⁴ David Cameron, the British Prime Minister, devoted his attention to terrorism issues.³⁵ Observers from OSCE circles described

32 Sergey Lavrov, *Speech at the 47th Munich Security Conference*, Munich, 5 February 2011, at: <http://www.securityconference.de/Lavrov-Sergey-V.696.0.html?&L=1>; Angela Merkel, *Speech at the 47th Munich Security Conference*, Munich, 5 February 2011, at: <http://www.securityconference.de/Merkel-Dr-Angela.624.0.html?&L=1>.

33 Hillary R. Clinton, *Speech at the 47th Munich Security Conference*, Munich 5 February 2011, at: <http://www.securityconference.de/Clinton-Rodham-Hillary.626.0.html?&L=1>.

34 Michele Alliot-Marie, *Speech at the 47th Munich Security Conference*, Munich 6 February 2011, at: <http://www.securityconference.de/Alliot-Marie-Michele.700.0.html?&L=1>.

35 David Cameron, *Speech at the 47th Munich Security Conference*, Munich 5 February 2011, at: <http://www.securityconference.de/Cameron-David.634.0.html?&L=1>.

the Munich Conference as the worst case scenario for how the OSCE is perceived throughout the continent.

Disillusionment: limited trust, unsuccessful framework for action

If the Corfu Process constituted a new format for the collective building of trust and confidence, its lack of tangible results and the course of the Astana Summit clearly demonstrated the limits of the mutual willingness to trust one another. The Corfu Process and the positive change in climate it represented were not (yet) able to dispel the divergences and conflicts of interest as far as the issues were concerned. Instead, differences relating to protracted conflicts involving four rather small entities in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus, which, although peripheral for Europe as a whole, had advanced to a prominent position thanks to Russia's Istanbul Commitments to withdraw its forces from Georgia and Moldova, prevented a consensus from being reached on the real central themes of the OSCE. They blocked the adoption of the virtually completed Astana Framework for Action "Shared Priorities and Objectives".³⁶

The Framework for Action should have contained the substantive content of the summit that most participating States had been striving for. The detailed terms of reference for the years ahead would have been embedded in it. Fifteen priorities were formulated in five sections and were for the most part ready for signing:

1. Restoring trust and confidence within the OSCE area;
2. Achieving a new level of co-operation in addressing threats to our security, including those arising from outside our area;
3. Strengthening partnerships and further developing co-operation among relevant organizations;
4. Strengthening the effectiveness and efficiency of the OSCE;
5. Follow-up and implementation. (ibid.)

As mentioned above, the Framework for Action foundered on the participating States' inability to find compromise formulations for the protracted conflicts. Specifically, the representatives of Georgia, Moldova, Romania and the Czech Republic intervened against the, in their opinion, inadequate thematization of these conflicts and the enduring deployment of foreign armed forces on the territory of sovereign states without the consent of the host country.³⁷ The failure to adopt the Astana Framework for Action means that the OSCE lacks the consensual foundation for work that it had been striving for. As a draft that has largely been negotiated, however, the Framework for Action constitutes a certain starting point for the OSCE's further endeavours.

Vision: Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community

The Astana Commemorative Declaration "Towards a Security Community" (SUM.DOC/1/10/Corr.1) reflects the considerable improvement in the discursive

³⁶ OSCE, *Astana Framework for Action "Shared Priorities and Objectives"*, CIO.GAL/179/10/Rev.5, 30 November 2010.

³⁷ See, for example: Delegation of Moldova, *Interpretative Statement under Paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the Rules of Procedure of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Attachment 3 to the Astana Commemorative Declaration "Towards a Security Community"*, SUM.DOC/1/10/Corr.1, 3 December 2010.

atmosphere between the European states since Evian and Nice in 2008 and Corfu in 2009. It constitutes a joint reiteration of the existing common OSCE norms, principles and commitments which was by no means a matter of course in this form and at the present time. As such it is indisputably a highly positive development, especially with regard to its formulations on human rights, basic freedoms and democracy, but also on the other two dimensions.

The Astana Commemorative Declaration has again given clearer emphasis to co-operation as an integrating element in the OSCE. Delegation circles believe that if the Declaration had not been adopted, the credibility of the OSCE would have suffered lasting damage. At the same time, it became clear that “[m]istrust and divergent security perceptions” which were referred to *expressis verbis* in the Commemorative Declaration could not be ironed out at Corfu or Astana.³⁸

Despite its title, the Commemorative Declaration is by no means a solely retrospective document. On the contrary: Its approach is also visionary. In the Declaration, the participating States have recommitted themselves “to the vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok, rooted in agreed principles, shared commitments and common goals” for the first time. (ibid.)

This geopolitical description of the OSCE is not entirely new. It gradually found its way into the OSCE vocabulary through the contributions from several delegations during the reform discussions in 2005/2006. The OSCE Panel of Eminent Persons, too, had referred to the OSCE’s transatlantic and Eurasian dimensions in 2005.³⁹ Later, similar references were made by the Spanish Chairmanship and the Greek Delegation at the Madrid Ministerial Council in 2007.⁴⁰ The Finnish Chairmanship suggested a paragraph for the Helsinki Ministerial Council in 2008 that was intended specifically to acknowledge the OSCE’s role in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area for the political declaration which was then not adopted after all.⁴¹ This is while the Russian draft for a European Security Treaty of November 2009 had also contained references to a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space from Vancouver to Vladivostok.⁴² And finally, the participating States had “welcome[d] the dialogue on the current and future challenges for security in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area” at the Athens Ministerial Council in 2009.⁴³

38 OSCE, *Astana Commemorative Declaration “Towards a Security Community”*, SUM.DOC/1/10/Corr.1, 3 December 2010.

39 OSCE Panel of Eminent Persons, *Common Purpose. Towards a More Effective OSCE. Final Report and Recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons “On Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE”*, 27 June 2005.

40 Permanent Mission of Spain to the OSCE, *Chairmanship’s Perception Paper on OSCE Basic Norms and Principles in the Field of Security Sector Governance/Reform*, MG.GAL/9/07, 30 November 2007, and: Permanent Mission of Greece to the OSCE, *Statement by the Delegation of Greece, Annex 2 to MC(15) Journal No. 2*, 30 November 2007.

41 Permanent Mission of Finland to the OSCE, *Elements for Political Declaration “Renewing the Spirit of Helsinki”*, pt. 3. “Recognising OSCE role in Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian Area”, CIO.GAL/167/08, 12 November 2008.

42 See: Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation, *European Security Treaty (Draft)*, Moscow, 29 November 2009, at: <http://www.mid.ru/ns-dvbr.nsf/dveurope/065fc3182ca460d1c325767f003073cc>.

43 OSCE, *Ministerial Declaration on the OSCE Corfu Process: Reconfirm-Review-Reinvigorate Security and Co-operation from Vancouver to Vladivostok*, MC.DOC/1/09, 2 December 2009.

The vision of a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community could *for one thing* be regarded to some extent as a call to refocus geopolitical attention on the Euro-Atlantic, in other words transatlantic, context, an approach for which the OSCE has a suitable framework, with the aim of including the USA more closely in institutional terms in multilateral pan-European security agreements. For another, Asian traditions and effects on the continent were also given special emphasis in Astana at long last; previously, they had always been perceived in the West either insufficiently or not at all. Even Russia's perception of itself as a Eurasian state has never attracted much attention.⁴⁴ *And finally*, the vision of a security community constitutes an intellectual return to political science discussions from the 1960s and 1970s.⁴⁵ It is remarkable that a term was adopted in this context which essentially relates to communities of values such as the later EU. This should make the ongoing discussion about the basic values of the OSCE area and the common structures and processes to be derived from it all the more illuminating.

Human dimension: from the Moscow to the Astana Document

The Astana Commemorative Declaration also includes a renewal of the human-dimension core principles and commitments. As well as the usual references to basic documents such as the Helsinki Final Act (1975), the Paris Charter (1990) and the Istanbul Charter for European Security (1999), it was the Document of the Moscow Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE (1991), in particular, which was reiterated almost verbatim as follows:

*"We reaffirm categorically and irrevocably that the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned."*⁴⁶

At summit meeting level, this declaration of commitment to human-dimension values and collective responsibility for internal developments in this field is a new departure. For one thing, its adoption is regarded by observers as a matter of negotiation tactics. Dispensing with this basic declaration while simultaneously dissenting from the Astana Framework for Action would have struck Western participating States as a pronounced loss of face.

At the same time, some important post-Soviet states are now increasingly taking a rather relaxed attitude to the OSCE's declarations about the third dimension. Today it is not unusual for states to concur as a matter of course with the OSCE's political rhetoric and legally non-binding value declarations. This generates its own declaratory level which leaves domestic-policy realities largely untouched.

44 Towards the end of the 19th century, and above all in the 1920s and 1930s, debates about the country's European and Asian dichotomy played an exceptional role in Russia's own perceptions in literature, academia and journalism. This dispute re-emerged in the 1990s. Barely noticed in the West, it is not restricted to educational elites and shapes public perceptions even in entertainment media.

45 Cf. Wolfgang Zellner, *The 2010 OSCE Astana Summit: An Initial Assessment*, in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Studies at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2010*, Baden-Baden 2011, p. 23ff, and: Emanuel Adler, *The OSCE as a security community*, in: *OSCE Magazine* 1/2011, p. 14f.

46 OSCE, *Astana Commemorative Declaration*, 3 December 2010, cited above (Note 38).

Over and above that, though, genuine willingness to discuss the human dimension is also evident. The entire process surrounding Kazakhstan's application for the Chairmanship, for example, can be regarded as part of President Nazarbayev's opening of his country to Western themes and values. Observers report that even Russia, for all its general problems in at least the human rights discussions, is currently following a co-operative line in the OSCE's Human Dimension Committee.

From a substantive point of view, there has been a qualitative need for new discussions about the human dimension for some years now to both the "West and East of Vienna". On the one hand, there is a well-known tendency towards restrictive, regressive development in some Eastern participating States. On the other hand, however, particularly in connection with the war on terror, considerable restrictions on human and civil rights and freedoms are evident in all regions within the OSCE area. This makes the OSCE's normative *acquis* in the third dimension all the more important.

Field operations: verbal emphasis with genuine reduction

The "importance of the work carried out by the [...] OSCE field operations, in accordance with their respective mandates, in assisting participating States with implementing their OSCE commitments" was emphasised explicitly in the Astana Commemorative Declaration. (ibid.)

De facto, however, the contrary trend – despite a growing need for conflict-preventing activities, the OSCE's field operations are being reduced – continues to prevail. This trend results from three developments. *Firstly*, important Western participating States are reducing their extra-budgetary financial contributions and their deployment of seconded personnel. This is new. It is often supported by arguments which refer to budgetary constraints caused by the economic and financial crisis. *Secondly*, the reduction in the OSCE's staff and resources in South-eastern Europe reflects the growing responsibility for this region held by the EU. In the process, however, latent threats to security in, for example, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Macedonia are frequently overlooked. *Thirdly*, it is well-known that a number of governments are resisting the OSCE's long-term presence within their states. The closure of the OSCE Office in Minsk at the beginning of 2011 was the most recent event with relevance in this area. Following the abandonment of the OSCE Mission to Georgia (2008), this might be perceived as a precursor of further closures, for example in Zagreb or Astana.

Conflict management: deeper misgivings

The OSCE is clearly in the process of giving up its role as a conflict manager – one of its most important comparative advantages. "The OSCE is not an instrument of crisis prevention. It must become one," said one member of a Western delegation.

The Astana Commemorative Declaration, however, issued a reminder that "[i]ncreased efforts should be made to resolve existing conflicts in the OSCE area in a peaceful and negotiated manner, within agreed formats, fully respecting the norms and principles of international law enshrined in the United Nations Charter, as well as the Helsinki Final Act". (ibid.) Despite the escalation of difficulties in Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, the Astana Summit also succeeded in persuading representa-

tives of both countries to renew their commitment to seek a lasting solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and “to bring real reconciliation to the peoples of the region”.⁴⁷ But in addition to these declaratory statements it was, in particular, the dissent regarding the well-known protracted conflicts that prevented the Astana Framework for Action from being adopted at the summit.

In addition to the protracted conflicts, moreover, there is little or no real appreciation of the significant latent conflict potential in the Balkans, Ukraine, the North Caucasus and Central Asia among important political actors and the OSCE. The hesitant involvement of the OSCE in Kyrgyzstan in June 2010 only served to highlight once again the misgivings of some individual participating States about the OSCE’s conflict mediation activities. Even a relatively minor support measure such as the deployment of the OSCE Police Advisory Group could be realized only after months of debate.

2.2. Results from the viewpoint of individual actors

2.2.1. Russia: astonishing confidence

Russia assessed the security-policy developments in 2010 with astonishing optimism. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov gave the following retrospective assessment:

“In 2010 leaders of the Euro-Atlantic States succeeded in improving considerably the atmosphere in pan-European affairs. The relations in the security area are undergoing radical transformation, showing less and less signs of confrontation and more and more elements of cooperation. The areas of common interests are expanding. [...] To a great extent, it is a result of a broad discussion on reforming the architecture of the continent, launched in response to President Dmitry Medvedev’s initiative to conclude the Euro-Atlantic Security Treaty (EST).”⁴⁸

His conclusion regarding Corfu and Astana, too, was strikingly positive. For example, he highlighted the fact that Russia, with its treaty initiative, was the initiator of a debate which might even come to contribute “to the creation of the truly Greater Europe”. (ibid.) From the viewpoint of Eurasian Russia, the holding of this summit was a great success which also symbolized the unbreakable bond between the OSCE’s Asian and European participating States.⁴⁹ In Foreign Minister Lavrov’s view, the summit, like the dialogue within the OSCE framework in general, demonstrated the growing need for co-operation, which, despite the failure to adopt a detailed action plan, had opened up positive prospects above all in the politico-military dimension, specifically for the modernization of the 1999 Vienna Document and in making “progress in addressing the deadlock in conventional arms control in Europe.” Finally, there was a common interest in resolving the “chronic conflicts that

47 OSCE, *Joint Statement by the Heads of Delegation of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chair Countries of the, and the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia, OSCE Summit Meeting 2010*, Astana, 1–2 December 2010, at: http://summit2010.osce.org/en/press_release/node/431.

48 Sergey Lavrov, 5 February 2011, cited above (Note 32).

49 Sergey Lavrov, *How the identity crisis can be overcome (Как преодолеть кризис идентичности)*, Rossijskaya Gazeta, 30 November 2010. (Translation by the author of this paper.)

still are a source of suspicions and discord”.⁵⁰ Foreign Minister Lavrov also declared generally – here with an eye on NATO-Russia relations in particular – that “we start our ascension towards the logic of positive interdependence”. (ibid.)

This gives rise to the question of what relationship prevails between these positive assessments on the one hand, and the real persisting differences in basic and detailed areas such as co-operation in missile defence, the reduction in short-range nuclear weapons, conventional arms control and the NATO deployment in Libya on the other. For one thing, the very fact that a continuing discussion process had been re-established in 2009 and 2010 was in itself regarded in Moscow as a substantial achievement. Foreign Minister Lavrov also described President Medvedev’s invitation to conduct open dialogue as the “essence of our initiative”. (ibid.) In addition, the expectations on the Russian side were lower than those of the West. This applies in particular to the Astana Summit, where Russia’s ambitions were far more modest than those of the Western states (cf. 1.6).

2.2.2. The USA: return to the first dimension and conflict management

The USA helped to steer the Corfu Process and the Astana Summit by giving very important signals. In 2010 it committed itself to a series of proposals in the Corfu Process’s brainstorming phase. In April 2010 it initiated the resolution on the holding of the Astana Summit. In all of these discussions, the USA made clear its interest in Central Asia and Afghanistan and in the fact that the OSCE would have to become more active in relation to Afghanistan. Although these interests were basically parallel to those of the Kazakhstani OSCE Chairmanship, little was achieved in respect of a strengthening of the OSCE’s activities in Central Asia and in relation to Afghanistan – even though US-Russian relations improved significantly in 2010 (New START, possible co-operation in the missile defence area) and the interests of Russia and the USA with regard to Afghanistan are very similar.

Officially, the USA rated Astana and the preceding discussion process as “significant” – “This has indeed been a significant year for our organization.”⁵¹ In their view, the Astana Commemorative Declaration was a remarkable achievement above all because it unambiguously reiterated the OSCE’s commitments in the human dimension. The USA also emphasized Kazakhstan’s commitment in including actors from civil society both in the run-up to and during the summit. The Commemorative Declaration, according to the USA, also offered the possibility of drawing up a serious plan of action in the future. (cf. ibid.)

For 2011, the USA is gearing itself towards addressing transnational threats such as terrorism, violent extremism, organized crime, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the illegal trafficking of arms, drugs and human beings. The co-operation with Afghanistan and the modernization of the 1999 Vienna Document, economic and environmental challenges and increased regard for democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law are further key points. The USA gave particular emphasis to conflict prevention and the resolution of protracted

50 Sergey Lavrov, 5 February 2011, cited above (Note 32).

51 United States Mission to the OSCE, *Response to the Statement by the Kazakhstani Chairmanship Regarding Follow-Up to the Astana Summit, as delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly*, PC.DEL/1141/10, 16 December 2010.

conflicts. (cf. *ibid.*) According to the USA, “key in the year ahead will be a greater capacity for the OSCE to respond to crises and to prevent conflicts from erupting or reigniting”.⁵²

2.2.3. The EU: return to the four original goal formulations

Immediately after the summit, the European Union emphasized the reiteration of the OSCE principles and commitments and the formulation of the common vision of a security community that had been achieved in Astana. After the Framework for Action had failed to win approval, the European Union referred to its aforementioned four priorities for strengthening the OSCE’s areas of competence (PC.DEL/539/10 and PC.DEL/639/10) which it had submitted during the preparations for the summit in June 2010. These four priorities show the EU’s future negotiating direction, also for 2011. In conceptual terms, then, the EU has returned to its starting position from before the Astana Summit. Here we refer specifically to the reaffirmation of “its firm and consistent commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders, in full respect of international law and the Helsinki Final Act” that was stated by the EU in the Annexes to the Astana Commemorative Declaration. It conserves the controversial relationships with Russia with regard to the Georgia conflict.⁵³

2.2.4. Kazakhstan: increase in prestige but problematic domestic policies

The fact that the summit was held at all has already been described explicitly as a success and an opportunity to reformulate relationships after a decade of tensions as well as the war in the OSCE area⁵⁴ by the Kazakh side. The political leaders of the participating States, they continued, had now recognized the significance of an integrative, comprehensive security community. There were presently more uniting than divisive issues. (cf. *ibid.*) In less formal discussions about Astana, the Kazakh side said the result was the best that could have been achieved under the present circumstances. Corfu and Astana had merely reflected the continuing disintegration of important participating States’ interests.

Professional political management

For Kazakhstan, the OSCE Chairmanship in 2010, the management of the first Kyrgyzstan crisis (April 2010) and the Astana Summit constituted an extraordinary political success. In these areas Kazakhstan set an example whose special impact the country is emphasizing specifically for its current chairmanship of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. For example, the Kazakhstani delegation refers to the special attention being paid to the OSCE in the Asian and Muslim world and to the possibility of spreading the OSCE’s experiences and practices there. (cf. *ibid.*)

52 United States Mission to the OSCE, *Response to Lithuanian Foreign Minister Audronius Ažubalis as delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly*, PC.DEL/14/11, 13 January 2011.

53 Delegation of the European Union, *Interpretative Statement under Paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the Rules of Procedure of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Attachment 1 to the Astana Commemorative Declaration “Towards a Security Community”*, SUM.DOC/1/10/Corr.1, 3 December 2010.

54 Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the OSCE, *The Road from Astana: The Way Ahead, Statement by Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov*, CIO.GAL/202/10, 15 December 2010.

Kazakhstan helped actively to steer the Corfu Process and the political preparation for Astana both organizationally and in terms of content. It proved to be a political actor with its own foreign policy emphases which hardly permitted undue influence by other influential participating States. In particular, the fear that Kazakhstan would act as a stooge of Russia proved to be unfounded.

Ambivalent domestic policy conclusion

The year of Chairmanship with its concluding summit was as positive for Kazakhstan as the effects of its Chairmanship envisaged by, in particular, Western partners were ambivalent for Kazakh domestic policy.

From the outset, Kazakhstan's OSCE Chairmanship took place against a backdrop of criticism of the country's problematic domestic political developments. The Kazakh side dealt with this fact in a tactical but at the same time pro-active manner. Its first public declaration of interest in the OSCE Chairmanship was given by Rakhat Aliyev, the head of the Kazakhstani delegation, at the very Permanent Council meeting in February 2003 at which the participants had previously been discussing the regular report by the Head of the OSCE Centre in Almaty. Ambassador Istvan Venczel has spoken in no uncertain terms of the "deteriorating domestic political situation and a regressive trend in democratization" in Kazakhstan.⁵⁵ Virtually as a response to this, Ambassador Aliyev announced the application for the Chairmanship, accompanied by harsh criticism of the OSCE.⁵⁶

The consternation of the West regarding the deficiencies of Russia, Kazakhstan and other participating States in the human dimension had been mounting for some considerable time. In conjunction with the OSCE reform discussions in 2005/2006, the Kazakh application for the Chairmanship became a question of principle in this very respect. The willingness of Western participating States to finally approve the application did not materialize until after lengthy discussions and the public undertaking by the Kazakh side to adhere firmly to the OSCE acquis in the human dimension and to initiate concrete reform measures in its domestic policy, for example in media and electoral law and the admission of political parties.⁵⁷ Foreign Minister Marat Tazhin gave his assurance to the OSCE at the Madrid Ministerial Council in 2007 that appropriate action would be taken before Kazakhstan had its application accepted.⁵⁸ Irrespective of that, the way in which Kazakhstan dealt with its commitments in the human dimension was ambiguous both on the OSCE stage and at the level of domestic policy.

Within the framework of the OSCE, Kazakhstan repeatedly made disapproving remarks about the Organization's commitments and took a number of opportunities

55 OSCE Centre in Almaty, *Report to the Permanent Council of OSCE by Ambassador Istvan Venczel, Head of the OSCE Centre in Almaty*, 18 February 2003, PC.FR/4/03, 13 February 2003.

56 Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the OSCE, *Statement by Mr. R.M. Aliyev, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan, at the Meeting of the Permanent Council*, 18 February 2003, PC.DEL/143/03, 19 February 2003.

57 Margit Hellwig-Bötte, *Kazakhstan's OSCE Chairmanship. The Road to Europe?*, in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Studies at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2008*, Baden-Baden 2009, p. 175ff.

58 Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the OSCE, *Address of H.E. Dr. Marat Tazhin, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, at the OSCE Ministerial Meeting*, MC.DEL/38/07, 29 November 2007.

to support the collective criticisms of the OSCE initiated by Russia, for example the Moscow Declaration and the Astana Appeal by CIS Member Countries (2004)⁵⁹, a position paper on the restructuring of the OSCE's field operations (2004)⁶⁰ and a draft of new basic principles for election monitoring by the OSCE (2007).⁶¹ On the other hand, Kazakhstan conducted relevant Corfu discussions and other types of OSCE talks on the human dimension in a professional manner during its Chairmanship in 2010. In these areas, the Kazakhstani Chairmanship helped to shape the OSCE's agenda with its own initiatives. As with other topics too, the Chair presented position papers on a number of occasions and, in addition, sent out invitations to its own high-ranking events such as an OSCE top-level conference on tolerance and non-discrimination (Astana, June 2010), to conferences marking the 20th anniversary of the Copenhagen Document and the Charter of Paris (Copenhagen and Paris, June and October 2010 respectively), and also to specialist conferences such as an expert seminar on electronic voting procedures (Vienna, September 2010).

Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev had made the following declaration on Kazakhstan's domestic policy commitments when Kazakhstan took over the Chairmanship:

*"By attaching great significance to the human dimension in the OSCE's activities we are demonstrating, above all in our own country, our firm commitment to this process. Further steps by Kazakhstan along the path to democratization will correspond entirely to the goals and tasks that we have set ourselves within the framework of our Chairmanship."*⁶²

The real domestic political process in Kazakhstan nevertheless remained largely untouched by all this. Criticism of, for example, the de facto one-party system and the treatment of journalists and opponents of the government remained on the agenda as before. Human Rights Watch gave a thoroughly negative appraisal of this situation after the Astana Summit:

"During its 2010 chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Kazakhstan's human rights record was marred by continued disappointments. Restrictive amendments to media and Internet laws remained, and a number of websites and weblogs were blocked on a regular basis. The government punished activists for breaking restrictive rules on freedom of assembly. Several activists were put on trial in 2010 and Kazakhstan's leading human rights defender, Evgeniy Zhovtis, remains in prison. [...] Key international actors, notably members of the OSCE, uncritically pledged

59 MFA of Russia, *Statement by CIS Member Countries on the State of Affairs in the OSCE*, Moscow, 3 July 2004, at: http://www.ln.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/3be4758c05585a09c3256ecc00255a52?OpenDocument, and: Delegations of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine to the OSCE, *Appeal of the CIS Member States to the OSCE Partners, Astana, 15 September 2004*, SEC.DEL/225/04, 16 September 2004.

60 Delegations of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia, *On the Issue of Reform of the OSCE Field Activities. A Food-for-Thought Paper*, PC.DEL/986/03, 4 September 2003.

61 Delegations of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, *Draft Decision on OSCE/ODIHR Observation of National Elections*, PC.DEL/898/07, 18 September 2007.

62 Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan at the OSCE, *Speech by the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Secretary of State/Foreign Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan, K. B. Saudabayev at the 789th Meeting of the Permanent Council of the OSCE (Выступление Действующего Председателя ОБСЕ, Государственного секретаря – Министра иностранных дел Республики Казахстан Саудабаева К.Б. на 789-м заседании)*, 14 January 2010, Vienna, CIO.GAL/5/10, at: <http://www.osce.org/ru/cio/41088>. (Translation by the author of this paper.)

their support for and cooperation with Kazakhstan during its OSCE chairmanship in 2010. They generally failed to use the chairmanship and Kazakhstan's bid to hold a summit at the end of 2010 as a lever to push for outstanding reforms.”⁶³

It would not, however, be accurate to reduce Kazakhstan's activities with regard to the human dimension to mere political rhetoric alone. The entire OSCE Chairmanship process from the submission of the application in 2003 to the Chairmanship year 2010 itself and the Astana Summit could certainly be regarded as a political opening towards Europe conceived by President Nazarbayev for parts of the Kazakh elite. For many diplomats, civil servants and academics at least, the Chairmanship brought a more intensive involvement with the OSCE's value *acquis*.

Recommendations for the subsequent Chairmanship

Immediately after Astana, the Kazakhstani Chairmanship summarized its recommendations for the subsequent Lithuanian Chairmanship. With their reference to the abortive Astana Framework for Action they were oriented not entirely, but nonetheless primarily, towards topics in the politico-military dimension, in particular the assessment of the OSCE's capacities in conflict management and the role of the OSCE Minsk Group in this context, the contribution made by the Organization in the international Geneva talks in the aftermath of the 2008 war between Georgia and Russia, and the “5+2” negotiations on Moldova that were scheduled for resumption. Further key points were transnational threats and challenges, the OSCE's contribution to stability in Afghanistan, and finally the modernization of the 1999 Vienna Document and agreement on a “Programme for Further Actions in the Field of Arms Control and Confidence- and Security-Building Measures”.⁶⁴

2.3. Implications for Lithuania's Chairmanship in 2011

Based on the assumption that a basis for work was lacking, the Lithuanian Chair declared at the beginning of 2011 that it wanted to turn useful ideas from the Framework for Action into results. It would “try to focus less on ‘plan’ and more on ‘action’”.⁶⁵ The Chair wanted to continue with the informal dialogue about Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security at several discursive levels in the style and spirit of the Corfu Process.⁶⁶ “We need successes and small steps”, was the view of the Chair and delegation circles – “a patchwork of small issues that can find a consensus.”

For its period in office, the Lithuanian Chair has emphasized mediation in the protracted conflicts as a priority but also, in particular, its intention of “extending OSCE activities in Georgia, including through a meaningful OSCE presence”. (ibid.) Also in focus were the issues of media freedom, transnational threats (including the threats originating in Afghanistan) as an obvious area of consensus, energy-security

63 Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2011: Kazakhstan, Events of 2010*, at: <http://www.hrw.org/en/world-report-2011/kazakhstan>.

64 Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the OSCE, *The Road from Astana: The Way Ahead, Statement by Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov*, CIO.GAL/202/10, 15 December 2010.

65 Renatas Norkus, *Pragmatic, practical steps*, in: OSCE Magazine 1/2011, p. 4.

66 Permanent Mission of the Republic of Lithuania to the OSCE, *2011 Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship Work Programme*, CIO.GAL/4/11/Rev.1, 12 January 2011.

dialogue and tolerance education.⁶⁷ In its work programme the Chair also specified the OSCE's structural capacities and instruments in the entire conflict cycle, OSCE field activities, the politico-military dimension and non-military security, issues relating to the human dimension, and the Organization's effectiveness and efficiency.

The Chair expressed its intention to deal with the OSCE's legal framework, in particular the prospects of an agreement on its legal personality, legal capacity, privileges and immunities and the possibilities of drawing up a founding document for the OSCE. (ibid.)

In mid-2011, in preparation for the Ministerial Council meeting in Vilnius, the Lithuanian Chair was particularly keen to focus on the protracted conflicts and on greater involvement by the OSCE in Central Asia. For the *first dimension*, the list of the resolutions it proposed for the Ministerial Council in Vilnius encompassed, in particular, programmatic coherence and co-ordination in dealing with transnational threats, a strategic framework for police-related activities, a concept for combating drug trafficking, a strategy for cyber-security, a consolidation of the mandates for counterterrorism and the modernization of the 1999 Vienna Document and a plan of action for arms control; in the *second dimension* it stressed energy and transport security and economic and environmental activities as confidence-building measures; in the *third dimension* it specified pluralism in the new media, the safety of journalists, the independence of national human rights organizations and the fight against intolerance in public discourse as well as the promotion of equal opportunities for women; and *across all dimensions* it emphasized the OSCE's role in the entire conflict cycle, the subject of internally displaced persons and refugees, trafficking in human beings and co-operations with the OSCE Partners for Co-operation.⁶⁸

3. Conclusions and options

The centre of European security policy is still occupied by the relationship between the West and Russia, even though this is increasingly being eclipsed by growing differentiation among national interests. This implies that a good US-Russian relationship is no longer the only condition, but nevertheless still the most important one for constructive European security policy.

The global 'reset' in US-Russian relations has clearly not yet left its mark on European security policy. Although it is recognized on all sides that the political atmosphere has improved, there has still been no breakthrough in any substantive area. This applies to military issues, including arms control, as much as it does to the unresolved military conflicts and issues relating to international co-operation. The protracted regional conflicts, in particular, have again demonstrated their destructive power: a new beginning for the CFE foundered on disagreement over Georgia and

67 Audronius Ažubalis, *In Freedom We Believe. Address by the Chairman in Office of the OSCE*, CIO.GAL/3/11/Rev.1, 13 January 2011.

68 Permanent Mission of the Republic of Lithuania to the OSCE, *Possible Deliverables for OSCE MC in Vilnius, December 2011. Chairmanship's Discussion Paper for the OSCE Ambassadorial Retreat in Baden*, 23–24 June 2011, CIO.GAL/115/11, 14 June 2011.

Moldova just as the Astana Framework for Action had done. As long as these old conflicts remain unresolved, they can flare up again at any time as the case of Georgia has shown in 2008. There is also potential for new centres of conflict in, for example, the Balkans, Ukraine, the North Caucasus and Central Asia. Finally, it cannot be taken for granted that the currently favourable political framework with regard to US-Russian relations will remain intact. If the US elections in November 2012 result in a Republican Administration which resumes its party's policy of intensified NATO enlargement (Georgia, Ukraine) and missile defence, the stage would be set for new tensions and conflicts with Russia.

The OSCE participating States would therefore have good reason to concern themselves more intensively with security in their region than they are doing at the moment. The fact that they are not sufficiently capable of doing so can be attributed to two main factors. For one thing, governments' attention and ability to act is hampered by a number of non-European conflicts from Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan to the current "Arab Spring". This is accentuated by the present financial and debt crisis. For another, the tendency to remain stuck in old patterns of thought and action, as well as an increasing diversification of national interests in Europe, is making it difficult to achieve substantial results with relatively modest investments in European security. This led to a situation where the European security initiatives of recent years were rather reactive in nature (for example, President Sarkozy's mediation in the Georgia conflict) or concerned with individual issues such as the Meseberg initiative launched by German Federal Chancellor Merkel and President Medvedev. An integrated concept for a European policy as defined by the OSCE principles of common, indivisible and co-operative security, however, is nowhere to be seen.

The holding of the Astana Summit can be attributed to the interaction of four factors: *firstly*, the shock of the Georgian conflict in 2008 and the resultant desire to start talking to each other more again; *secondly*, the foreign-policy emphases of the new Obama Administration; and *thirdly* the Russian desire for more discussion and co-operation which had already become evident before Georgia with the Medvedev initiative. These three factors led to the Corfu Process. To make the Astana Summit possible there had to be a *fourth* factor as well: Kazakhstan's unwavering determination in hosting such a summit. It is symptomatic that the catalyst, without whom there would probably have been no summit, was a political newcomer from the OSCE's Asian periphery – although it is no longer peripheral in global political terms. This reflects the fact that under the present circumstances, smaller states can succeed not only in blocking political processes, but also in helping to shape them – especially when they have coveted resources at their disposal.

In terms of substance and content, the scheduling of the Astana Summit was always a wager on a qualitative leap. The intention was to achieve in double-quick time what had eluded the Corfu Process: unity on key issues of European security. The political calculation lay in building up pressure for success, which in turn would make it possible to attain something that would never have been possible so quickly under normal circumstances. It is remarkable that this objective was achieved in the first – visionary – area and came very close to success in the second – concrete – area.

By formulating the goal of a "Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community" the OSCE States agreed on a visionary objective that goes beyond any declaration that had previously been negotiated within the CSCE/OSCE framework. It gives

expression to the desire for better, co-operative relations as well as the fact that conflict and confrontation no longer set the basic tone of European security relationships.

In relation to the Astana Framework for Action “Shared Priorities and Objectives”, not only the overall failure is worthy of comment, but also the number of joint positions it proved possible to agree on. If the Framework for Action had been adopted, this would have been the most substantive political declaration at least since Istanbul 1999. That it foundered on disagreement over Georgia and Moldova demonstrates that these conflicts’ political toxicity goes far beyond their inherent significance. If further progress in the OSCE is not to be impeded time and again, these conflicts will have to be either resolved or isolated.

Since Astana, the OSCE has been grappling with a field of tension between a positive vision on the one hand and the lack of concrete results on the other. This field of tension is unstable and, in all probability, cannot be maintained indefinitely. It is more likely to incline one way or the other and lead to more co-operation or more conflict. If the OSCE’s activities, even if limited, fail to produce concrete results in the foreseeable future, this will have a detrimental effect on the Organization’s positive vision. Changes in the political framework, including changes in presidencies and governments in key participating States, can make significant contributions to developments. The negative general conditions for the further development of the OSCE also include the fact that many governments have hastily sidelined the topic of pan-European co-operation within the OSCE framework again since Astana. Against this backdrop, three different but not always distinctly separable options for politics in and with the OSCE are conceivable:

- a) *Option 1: Carry on as before.* Option 1 rests on the prolongation of existing trends. The national political elites do not greatly concern themselves with the OSCE and the Organization is largely left to the lower rungs of their hierarchies. As before, the budget is gradually being reduced. As the debt crisis persists, further financial cutbacks cannot be ruled out. The number and scope of the OSCE’s field operations are being reduced from inside and outside – firstly through fewer secondments and lower extra-budgetary resources, and secondly as a result of the fact that previous host countries are increasingly trying to divest themselves of their field operations. There is a general trend towards restricting activity to what can be achieved in the short term. Serious attempts to reconcile differences of a more fundamental nature are no longer made.

As a result, the Organization is largely withdrawing from the field of conflict management, instead leaving it to other organizations such as the EU, the SCO or the CSTO. All in all, this option represents a continuation of the ongoing marginalization of the OSCE that has been evident for years. From a certain point onwards, this process can also take on a rapid and more visible course. It is probable that sooner or later, such a marginalization would spread to all the OSCE’s areas of endeavour. It is, however, certainly illusory to believe that the Organization could withdraw from conflict management but still be capable of arms control or election monitoring. In a marginalization scenario, the gap between the vision and reality of a security community would grow to such an extent that the vision would become

meaningless. There would be a danger that the basic values, commitments and structures of collective security in Europe elaborated since 1975 would largely be lost along with the OSCE.

- b) *Option 2: Concentrate on themes capable of achieving a consensus.* Option 2 would essentially mean concentrating on that chapter of the Astana Framework for Action which deals with transnational threats. Special themes would be, for example, the elaboration of an OSCE police concept, giving a concrete form to the 2003 Maastricht Document, or the consolidation of the Organization's counterterrorist mandate. On the other hand, no serious attempts would be made to resolve at least one of the protracted conflicts and enhance the range of instruments for handling conflicts in the future.

Whether option 2 would be workable in the long term, in the sense of the OSCE's capacity to act and remain intact and the marginalization process at least not being intensified any further, is difficult to assess. Grounds for scepticism are, however, provided by the fact that the complex conflict constellations, such as those in Central Asia, not only display transnational elements but also demand the capacity to engage in internal conflict management. The OSCE found out in Kyrgyzstan in 2010 that a security organization must be capable of both to operate successfully.

- c) *Option 3: Restore the ability to prevent and resolve crises.* Option 3 demands, *firstly*, the resolution of at least one of the protracted conflicts, most likely the conflict in Moldova. This cannot be done without involving the respective political leaders – see the Meseberg initiative. Furthermore, there would have to be a more fundamental consensus with Russia regarding the resolution of this group of conflicts and the OSCE's role in connection with this. A *second* element of option 3 requires the enhancement of the OSCE's range of crisis management instruments (a number of proposals were submitted on this subject during the Corfu Process) and its orientation towards those regions in which crisis and conflicts can be expected or not ruled out, in other words towards Central Asia and the North Caucasus in particular, but also towards Ukraine. This, too, will require high-level agreement with Russia and the EU. Option 3 would also take up the substance of option 2 and lead to a scenario in which the OSCE would be capable of taking action both against transnational threats and in relation to classical types of conflict. The Organization as a whole regaining its capacity to act would be the overall result.

The current reality of action absorbs elements from options 1 and 2. On the one hand, the reduction in capacities is continuing in a number of fields, and on the other, a number of resolutions on the transnational themes specified under option 2 are being prepared for the Ministerial Council in Vilnius in 2011. Whether that will be enough to stop the OSCE's marginalization process and restore its capacity to act remains to be seen.

About the Author

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Dr Evers is a generalist in the field of OSCE conflict management in the broadest sense. Regionally, his main concentration is on the East-Slavic and South Caucasus countries, and adjoining regions. Substantively, his research focuses on various components of security-building, including minority issues, inter-confessional relations and economic, social and environmental affairs.

About CORE

The Centre for OSCE Research (CORE), founded in 2000, is the only institute specifically dedicated to research on the OSCE. Located in Hamburg, Germany, within the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy (IFSH), CORE operates as a politically independent think tank, combining basic research on the evolution of the OSCE with demand-driven capacity-building projects and teaching. Addressing political actors, the academic community and the interested general public in Germany and abroad, CORE strives to contribute to the OSCE's development with analysis and critique that provide insight into the problems faced by and opportunities open to the Organization. For more information about CORE or this paper, please contact:

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