

Kazakhstan's OSCE Chairmanship – The Road to Europe?¹

Madrid, 29 November 2007, 6:35 p.m.

In the early evening of 29 November 2007, Kazakh Foreign Minister Marat Tazhin gave his keenly awaited speech to the OSCE Ministerial Council in Madrid. Kazakhstan had that day swapped its place in the order of speeches with Turkey. The Council meeting had also fallen behind schedule, and it was unclear when the foreign minister of the country whose application to hold the OSCE Chairmanship absolutely had to be decided upon in Madrid would be able to speak. After he had done so,² all eyes turned to the head of the US delegation, who was applauding enthusiastically. The decision had been made, even if it would only be officially confirmed the next day. Kazakhstan would assume the Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010. How did this come to pass?

Kazakhstan's Application

In early 2003, during a discussion in the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna on the work of the OSCE Centre in Almaty and a controversial debate on co-operation between OSCE field missions and their host countries, the then Kazakh Permanent Representative to the OSCE, Ambassador Rakhat Aliev, announced his country's candidacy for the 2009 OSCE Chairmanship. He justified the candidacy in terms of the economic and political transformation of his country, which is unsurpassed in Central Asia. Kazakhstan possesses a functioning market economy, he noted, great progress has been made in establishing a society based on equality of opportunity and human rights, and the social solidarity in this multiethnic and multiconfessional country is exemplary. He admitted that a great deal naturally still needs to be done to strengthen the democratic foundations of the society, but stressed that Kazakhstan intended to expand its co-operation with the OSCE, as the latter's comprehensive approach to security is in tune with Kazakhstan's foreign

1 The following comments reflect the personal views of the author, not the position of the German Foreign Office. I would like to thank Constanze Fleischhauer and Florian Seitz for their active support.

2 Cf. *Address of H.E. Dr. Marat Tazhin, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, at the OSCE Ministerial Meeting (Madrid, November 29, 2007)*, MC.DEL/38/07, 29 November 2007, at: http://www.osce.org/documents/mcs/2007/11/28529_en.pdf.

policy priorities.³ Kazakhstan thus became the first Central Asian country and the first member of the CIS to throw its hat in the ring.

Kazakhstan – Central Asia’s Model Pupil?

After achieving independence and joining the CIS,⁴ Kazakhstan pursued a balanced foreign policy, maintaining good relations with its neighbours as well as contacts with Europe and the USA. In the first half of the 1990s, the country endured a period of uncertainty – a consequence of its disentanglement from the Soviet Union and transformation into an independent state. Since 1999, however, economic development has accelerated, based primarily on oil and gas wealth and the attractiveness for foreign investors that this has brought. In the wake of the economic boom, President Nursultan Nazarbayev also made the enhancement of Kazakhstan’s political and diplomatic status an explicit policy goal, with the aim of making the country into a significant actor in the Eurasian space – the triangle defined by European, Russian, and Chinese power. He was helped in this not only by his country’s economic power, but also by the good example that Kazakhstan had set in the region as a stable, religiously tolerant, multiethnic state with no significant interethnic conflicts.

As it received the unreserved support of the international business community,⁵ Kazakhstan’s self-confidence grew. At the same time, however, human-rights organizations pointed to ongoing deficits in democratic development, the enforcement of human-rights standards, freedom of expression, and other problematic domestic developments.⁶ The interests of business, on the one hand, and the concerns of human-rights organizations, on the other, mean that a sense of disharmony has tended to exist whenever talk turns to Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan joined the OSCE in 1992, and, in doing so, accepted the Organization’s entire *acquis*. At that time, similarly to its CIS partners, and especially its Central Asian neighbours, Kazakhstan arguably had only a vague understanding of the commitments into which it had entered. Although the CIS has developed into a fairly heterogeneous entity whose members have not always taken a joint line – including in the OSCE – they shared a powerful cultural solidarity. Kazakhstan adopted as its own the criticisms of

3 Cf. OSCE, Permanent Council, PC.DEL/143/03, 19 February 2003.

4 The CIS was founded in 1991 by Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

5 As exemplified by the conference organized by the German Society for Foreign Policy (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik, DGAP*) and the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations (*Ost-Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft, OADW*) with President Nazarbaev at the Hotel Adlon in Berlin, 31 January 2007.

6 Cf. the press release from Human Rights Watch, *Kazakhstan: OSCE Chairmanship Undeserved*, 30 November 2007, at: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/11/30/kazakh17458.htm>.

the OSCE made with increasing vigour since 2004 by Russia, and summarized in the “Astana Appeal”, which was signed by all the CIS states with the exception of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Turkmenistan.⁷ It contains a list of demands for OSCE reform, calling above all for the enhancement of the security dimension, the curtailment of the human dimension, and a reduction in the activities of the field presences. The human dimension and field missions are described as manifestations of double standards and an interference in domestic affairs by the West. As far as the latter is concerned, however, the reform proposals contained in the Astana Appeal contradict the principles of the Charter of Paris – which was signed in 1990 as a founding document of the OSCE to stand alongside the Final Act of Helsinki (1975) – and the 1991 Moscow Document.⁸

Against this background, Kazakhstan’s application for the OSCE Chairmanship and the resulting debates over the pros and cons led to a split among both the OSCE participating States and the EU into a larger group of supporters of the plan and a smaller group of opponents.

Disunity in the EU

The EU traditionally shows solidarity with the USA and other Western countries in the OSCE, and stresses the key significance of the human dimension. This includes the protection of human-rights defenders, the observation of human-rights and rule-of-law standards, and the support for democratic reform and transformation processes. The EU had difficulties with Kazakhstan’s application from the start, and most of its member states were rather slow to address it seriously. While they all welcomed Kazakhstan’s willingness to take on more responsibility, they could not agree on how this should be achieved. For a long time, the common EU position therefore consisted of an extremely low common denominator, namely the statement that the Chairmanship needs to embody the standards and values of the Organization in an exemplary manner.

On the one side were those EU member states that stressed the equality of OSCE participating States and thus recognized the legitimacy that this gave Kazakhstan’s application for the OSCE Chairmanship. They also called

7 *Appeal of the CIS Member States to the OSCE Partners*, Astana, 15 September 2004. Distributed at the request of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine, SEC.DEL/225/04, 16 September 2004 (unofficial translation from the Russian).

8 In the Moscow Document, the OSCE participating States have “categorically and irrevocably” declared “that the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension of the CSCE are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned”. Document of the Moscow Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, in: Arie Bloed (ed.), *The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Analysis and Basic Documents, 1972-1993*, Dordrecht 1993, pp. 605-629, here: p. 606.

for democratic reforms and the observance of human-rights standards, but rejected utterly any discussion of an OSCE Chairmanship with conditions attached. These states – including Germany, which had supported Kazakh ambitions from the start – tended to see the advantages of the application and the process of reaching a positive decision and of the actual exercise of the Chairmanship by Kazakhstan.

On the other side were the EU countries that wanted to draw up a list of “benchmarks” for the application process and to use them to monitor Kazakhstan’s compliance along the way. This would allow them to maintain an influence on proceedings and even to withdraw their consent if necessary. Behind this scepticism lay the concern of a number of EU states that the Kazakh Chairmanship could threaten the human dimension *acquis*, take the OSCE – entirely in the Russian interest – down the path of an organization entirely dominated by its governments, and if not endanger the very existence of its flexible, independent institutions, above all the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), certainly reduce their effectiveness. This view was supported by the United States, among others. However, in taking this position, these states effectively denied Kazakhstan the right to equality and risked establishing a precedent for subsequent candidates for the Chairmanship.

The Struggle over Principles within the OSCE

The dispute over the Kazakh Chairmanship coincided with the discussion of OSCE reform. In response to the Astana Appeal, the 2004 Sofia OSCE Ministerial Council appointed a “Panel of Eminent Persons”,⁹ which presented extensive proposals for the reform of the Organization in the summer of 2006,¹⁰ although it did not prove possible to achieve a consensus on such a wide-ranging package. At the Brussels Ministerial Council in 2006, the foreign ministers adopted only technical reforms,¹¹ that left the heart of the dispute untouched: Russia and the CIS on the one side, and the USA and the EU on the other could not agree on the central question of the significance of the human dimension. During 2006, Russia linked the question of OSCE reform

9 Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Twelfth Meeting of the Ministerial Council*, Sofia, 6 and 7 December 2004, MC.DOC/1/04, 7 December 2004, Decision No. 16/04, Establishment of a Panel of Eminent Persons on Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE, MC.DEC/16/04 of 7 December 2004, pp. 56-57.

10 *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, reprinted in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2005*, Baden-Baden 2006, pp. 359-379, available online at: http://www.osce.org/documents/cio/2005/06/15432_en.pdf.

11 Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Fourteenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council*, 4 and 5 December 2006, Brussels 2006, 5 December 2006, Decision No. 19/06, Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE, MC.DEC/19/06, 5 December 2006, pp. 58-62.

with the decision on the Chairmanship: A decision in favour of Kazakhstan, which the CIS had adopted as its chosen candidate in August 2005,¹² would show that the OSCE was capable of reform. Russia and several other CIS states warned that a decision against Kazakhstan would see the work of the Organization grind to a halt and lead to the marginalization of the OSCE.¹³ The climax of this dispute was reached at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Brussels in December 2006, when the participating States failed to reach agreement on the 2009 Chairmanship as they were required to, and postponing the decision was the only way to ensure the Organization remained united while simultaneously preserving Kazakhstan's chance of a positive decision in the coming year.¹⁴ Nonetheless, Russia was very clear in expressing its dissatisfaction with this decision and declared that it would accept no decision that would place conditions on the assumption of the OSCE Chairmanship in the following year.¹⁵

German Support

Prior to the launch of its bid for the Chairmanship, Kazakhstan had proved a rather awkward partner to the OSCE. Its fulfilment of OSCE standards remained partial, especially in the human dimension; promising attempts at co-operation were few and far between; and there was little will to work together with the OSCE Centre in Almaty. While Kazakhstan repeatedly stressed the significance that co-operation with the OSCE possessed for its foreign policy, it simultaneously complained of a lack of understanding of its special features and path of development. By applying for the OSCE Chairmanship, Kazakhstan had staked a claim to improve its profile on the international stage and play a trailblazing role in Central Asia and beyond. Supporting these ambitions would make it possible to press more strongly for the observation of the OSCE *acquis*, as an OSCE Chairmanship can only enjoy international success and respect if it also convincingly embodies the values for which it speaks and acts. This was the message Germany's then chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, delivered to President Nazarbayev during his visit to Astana on 4-5 December 2003, where he also announced that Germany was willing to support Kazakhstan's candidacy for 2009.

Since then, Kazakhstan has made a number of improvements – particularly in comparison to its neighbours. In principle, it has a multiparty system,

12 Cf. OSCE, Permanent Council, PC.DEL/820/05, 30 August 2005

13 Cf. *Address of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan to the OSCE Ministerial Council in Brussels*, MC.DEL/5/06, Brussels, 3 December 2006.

14 Cf. *Fourteenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council*, cited above (Note 11), Decision No. 20/06, Future OSCE Chairmanship, MC.DEC/20/06, 5 December 2006, pp. 63-64.

15 Cf. *ibid.*, Interpretative Statement under Paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the *OSCE Rules of Procedure*, Attachment 2 to MC.DEC/20/06, p. 64.

which has legitimized the establishment of opposition parties. The judiciary and criminal law have been fundamentally overhauled; trial by jury was introduced for serious crimes at the start of 2007. Freedom of religion, respect for minority rights, and tolerance of refugees are largely guaranteed. The beginnings of a system for monitoring human rights are in place in the form of an ombudsman and national commissions for human rights, democratization, and civil society. In November 2005, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) was ratified, and the First Optional Protocol to the covenant was signed in late 2007.

However, in its dialogue with representatives of the Kazakh government, Germany had repeatedly pointed out the areas where the Kazakh political system was in need of further improvement and had echoed the criticisms made by the OSCE. These included the recommendations made by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media on the improvement of the country's media laws and those made by ODIHR on the reform of Kazakhstan's electoral law, a reconsideration of the considerable hurdles to the registration of political parties, and the introduction of direct elections at the local level as a further key step towards ensuring the right to the democratic expression of will.

Germany and Kazakhstan traditionally enjoy good relations, ever since, on 31 December 1991, Germany became the first – and for a long time the only – country to recognize Kazakh independence. Among the factors that prompted Germany to promise to support Kazakhstan's application for the OSCE Chairmanship was a recognition of Central Asia's steadily growing significance for Europe. Particularly since 11 September 2001, the countries in that region are playing an increasingly important role in key issues for the international community, such as ensuring security and stability, combating international terrorism and organized crime (particularly in the areas of trafficking in human beings, drugs, and weapons), and protecting energy supplies. Against this backdrop, supporting Kazakhstan promised positive effects for the development of the region, its co-operation with Europe, and the security situation around Afghanistan.

The EU's Central Asia Strategy

This set of justifications was taken up by the German EU Presidency, and resulted in the EU Central Asia Strategy adopted at the European Council in Brussels on 21-22 June 2007.¹⁶ It is based upon a comprehensive approach to co-operation with Central Asia and was developed in close partnership with the states of the region. Initial elements were discussed at a meeting between the EU Troika of foreign ministers and their Central Asian counterparts on

16 *The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership*, at: <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/Europa/Aussenpolitik/Regionalabkommen/Zentralasien.html>.

28 March 2007 in Astana to involve the countries concerned in the early planning, as a spirit of open co-operation was essential to the plan's success. Kazakhstan is the key country in the region, and its support was therefore critical. Hence, the Kazakh application for the OSCE Chairmanship, though not an object of the strategy, played an important role in its development, as it encouraged Kazakh willingness to co-operate, thus determining the horizon of expectation of both sides.

The Madrid Decision

The participants at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Madrid faced a heavy burden of expectation. Following the failure to reach a decision at Brussels in December 2006, the need to decide who would lead the Organization in 2009 was imperative. According to the OSCE's regulations, the question of the 2010 Chairmanship also had to be decided at Madrid. The candidates remained unchanged, with Kazakhstan applying for 2009 and Lithuania for 2010. Greece had already declared itself willing to accept the Chairmanship in case criticism of Kazakhstan made it necessary to seek a substitute candidate.

During 2007, Kazakhstan had undertaken a number of initiatives to improve its standing with critics of its candidacy. In May, a constitutional reform was adopted that brought improvements in the area of rule of law (habeas corpus, limitation of the death penalty to acts of terrorism and serious crimes) and a certain strengthening of parliamentary power. At the same time, however, the reform strengthened the position of President Nazarbayev, by allowing him to stand for a third term while remaining chairman of the ruling *Nur Otan* party.¹⁷ This served to further strengthen the presidential system and improved *Nur Otan*'s prospects for the parliamentary elections to be held in August 2007 at the expense of the – already weak – opposition parties. While ODIHR did acknowledge that Kazakhstan had made a number of limited improvements since the last elections, it found fault with the conditions under which the election took place, and particularly the electoral law, whose seven per cent threshold made it hard for opposition parties to enter parliament, thus leading to a one-party legislature.¹⁸

17 Cf. Valeri Sitenko/Anton Morosov, *Kasakhstan. Daten – Fakten – Hintergründe* [Kazakhstan. Figures – Facts – Background], Berlin 2007, pp. 37-38.

18 Cf. OSCE-ODIHR/OSCE Parliamentary Assembly/Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, International Election Observation Mission, Parliamentary Election, Republic of Kazakhstan, 18 August 2007, *Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions*, Astana, 19 August 2007, at: www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2007/08/25960_en.pdf, as well as OSCE, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Republic of Kazakhstan, Parliamentary Elections, 18 August 2007, *OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report*, Warsaw, 30 October 2007, at: www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2007/10/27638_en.pdf.

The EU and the USA, in particular, had expected the Kazakh parliamentary elections to give a clearer signal that progress was being made towards improving the observation of OSCE commitments and democratic standards. This was only realized in part. For the participants of the Madrid Ministerial Council, the evaluation of developments in Kazakhstan in 2007 continued to depend on perspective: The critics considered the glass to be half empty, the supporters saw it as half full.

Even as the Ministerial Council began, the prospects of an agreement still appeared poor. Behind the scenes, however, a flurry of diplomatic activity began, particularly between the Kazakh and US delegations. The USA was the key mover among the sceptics. Even if the US government had not yet taken a definite position on this question, it was the position of the US government that would determine whether a decision would be made in Kazakhstan's favour or not. And this in turn would determine whether the OSCE could demonstrate and retain its ability to act.

The solution could only consist of a compromise that took account of the interests of all candidates, Russia's criticisms of the conditional decision made in Brussels in 2006, and the fundamental misgivings of the critics of the proposed Kazakh Chairmanship. Furthermore, there could be neither winners nor losers. Taking account of these factors, a solution was found that provided Chairmen-in-Office for the next three years: Greece in 2009, Kazakhstan in 2010, and Lithuania in 2011.¹⁹ The path to this solution had been prepared by the speech to the Ministerial Council by the Kazakh foreign minister, which included clear statements of commitment to ODIHR and the human dimension of the OSCE.²⁰

Hopes and Expectations

Kazakhstan would like to use its OSCE Chairmanship to improve its regional and international standing and prestige. In this regard, it is therefore "damned to succeed". Merely applying for the Chairmanship ensured that it would receive considerable attention. Thanks to the advance of trust placed in it at Madrid, Kazakhstan can be sure of receiving attentive and critical attention in the period up to its assumption of the Chairmanship in 2010. Kazakhstan is obliged to retrospectively win-over some of its critics, and therefore needs to do everything to demonstrate its organizational abilities, prove that it is a good moderator, and play a constructive role in the OSCE and other international organizations. If it should take the path of political obstructionism within the OSCE, this would do its reputation lasting damage.

19 Cf. Decision No. 11/07, OSCE Chairmanships in 2009, 2010 and 2011, MC.DEC/11/07, 30 November 2007, in: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Fifteenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council*, 29 and 30 November 2007, Madrid 2007, 30 November 2007, pp. 37-38.

20 Cf. *Address of H.E. Dr. Marat Tazhin*, cited above (Note 2).

Positive effects can also be expected on Kazakhstan's internal development. The reform agenda and the desire for expert technical preparation are considered major priorities, as became obvious in President Nazarbayev's address to the nation in February 2008, in which he announced the creation of the "Path to Europe" programme, which aimed at promoting economic co-operation, in areas including technology and management, improving legislation, and preparing a "strategic vision" for the Kazakh OSCE Chairmanship. He also called for all departments of government to be included in the work of preparing for the Chairmanship.²¹ This could lead to modernization and an increase of efficiency in the government's work.²²

During the implementation of the EU Central Asia Strategy, a Kazakh Chairmanship of the OSCE could have a positive influence on regional integration in Central Asia, as long as it takes account of the strong prejudice in the region against individual states taking on a "leadership role". If Kazakhstan embraces the elements of the strategy that suggest a regional approach (such as combating organized crime and trafficking in human beings, weapons, and drugs, and terrorism; border management; energy issues; environmental degradation; water management; and migration), co-operation with the EU could be accompanied by OSCE measures to promote "co-operative security". This also applies to dialogue with regional organizations such as the Shanghai Co-operation Organization (SCO) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

Prospects for the Future of the OSCE

If the Kazakh candidacy had been rejected or the idea put on ice, it would have led to the country's estrangement from the OSCE, while similarly damaging the Organization's relations with the other CIS states. The divisions within the OSCE would have become deeper, which would have made debates over the competency of election monitoring missions and the extension of mandates even more difficult. Kazakhstan and its neighbours would have reoriented their political compasses away from Europe to Asia.

The alternative offers numerous opportunities. As the first CIS country to assume the responsibility of the Chairmanship. Kazakhstan can send out an

21 Cf. *Address by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan H.E. Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev to the people of Kazakhstan*, February 2008, at: http://www.akorda.kz/www/www_akorda_kz.nsf/sections?OpenForm&id_doc=0793D9432423DDE5062573EC0048005B&lang=en&L1=L2&L2=L2-22.

22 Long before the Madrid decision was made, Germany responded to Kazakh requests by starting to provide OSCE-specific training that would help the country to perform the work of the Chairmanship effectively. A young Kazakh diplomat was taken on as a trainee at the OSCE section of the German foreign office as early as 2006; in 2007 and 2008, the Centre for OSCE Research (CORE) at the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH), with the support of the foreign office, ran training courses for Kazakh diplomats. A third course with a larger number of participants from Kazakhstan and Lithuania is being planned for 2009.

important signal of “co-ownership” that might encourage the critics of the OSCE to identify with it more strongly once again. Kazakhstan is already involved in decision making as a member of the “Quintet”,²³ and has assumed the responsibility of chairing the Economic and Environmental Committee of the OSCE.

Kazakhstan can help to ensure that the Organization focuses even more strongly on Central Asia as a region in which the OSCE’s involvement brings greater added value in terms of security policy. This is not to call into question the effectiveness of the OSCE in other regions, particularly the Balkans. But against the background of the development of the EU’s European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the growing closeness of many countries, including those in the Western Balkans, to the EU and NATO, and the increasing assumption of OSCE tasks by the EU, the OSCE will need to shift the focus of its activities more strongly to the South Caucasus and Central Asia in the medium term. In contrast to the EU, the OSCE has so far developed no strategy for Central Asia of its own.²⁴ But even without a fully developed strategy, the Kazakh Chairmanship will still be able to build upon existing OSCE initiatives and bring about progress in the region. This conclusion is based upon the following considerations:

- *Central Asia has a major need to catch up in the areas of border security and border management.* Implementing the border security and management concept adopted at the 2005 Ljubljana Ministerial Council while working closely with the EU Border Management Programme for Central Asia (BOMCA) could help.²⁵
- *The OSCE field presences in Central Asia urgently need to be expanded.* Kazakhstan has a unique opportunity to actively involve the OSCE Centre in Astana and its liaison office in Almaty in preparing and carrying out its Chairmanship. This could have positive effects on those Central Asian countries that are constantly seeking to have the mandates of their OSCE field presences restricted.

23 Alongside Finland, which holds the Chairmanship in 2008, the members of the Quintet are Spain (2007), Greece (2009), Kazakhstan (2010) and Lithuania (2011). Under the Finnish Chairmanship, the former OSCE Troika has been expanded in this way, following the Madrid decision on the OSCE Chairmanships in 2009, 2010, and 2011, cited above (Note 19).

24 One was called for as early as 1999 by Ambassador Wilhelm Höyneck, the first Secretary General of the OSCE. The OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre produced a strategy paper in April 2006, calling for the OSCE to return to its core competencies of identifying regional conflict potential and conflict prevention. Cf. Tim Epkenhans, *The OSCE’s Dilemma in Central Asia*, in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2006*, Baden-Baden 2007, pp. 211-222.

25 Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Thirteenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council*, 5 and 6 December 2005, Ljubljana 2005, 6 December 2005, *Border Security and Management Concept*, MC.DOC/2/05 of 6 December 2005, pp. 9-15. This document is the basis for the projects for the Tajik-Afghan and Tajik-Chinese borders, which were developed by the OSCE Secretariat on the request of the Tajik government, and which are being put into action since 2008, with German participation.

- *Kazakhstan announced at the Ministerial Council that the OSCE would be expanded as a new platform for dialogue between Europe and Asia. A broad security dialogue encompassing all the dimensions of the OSCE would offer opportunities to build on European experiences and the principles of the old CSCE, to address the idea of confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs), and simultaneously to make use of the format for dialogue on the necessary development of civil society, modernization and social transformation, and the rule of law and good governance.*
- *Kazakhstan has good prospects for intensifying the dialogue between the OSCE and regional organizations such as the SCO and CSTO. Those of the OSCE's Asian Partners for Co-operation that are interested in this kind of co-operation could be involved more intensively in this process, and the question could be raised as to whether there is a prospect for involving China as an OSCE Partner for Co-operation in the long-term.*
- *Against the background of Kazakhstan's avowal of its commitment to ODIHR and the principles of the human dimension, it will have to take a position in the dispute with Russia over ODIHR, election monitoring, and OSCE reform. There is no way Kazakhstan can go back on the promises made in Madrid without losing face. At the same time, however, Astana's close association with Russia will remain, setting up an interesting balancing act.*
- *The August 2008 crisis between Russia and Georgia over South Ossetia has returned "frozen conflicts" – including Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh – to the top of the OSCE agenda. Kazakhstan has carefully weighed up its reaction towards Russian recognition of South Ossetian and Abkhaz independence. It remains to be seen whether a CIS member as OSCE Chairman can benefit from its special relationship with Russia and the conflict parties. Demand is already increasing for the OSCE as a platform for dialogue on European security and as a moderator to support conflict resolution.*

Madrid, 29 November 2007, 6:55 p.m.

The OSCE is the only regional security organization that allows Europe, its transatlantic partners, and the countries of Central Asia to participate in an ongoing dialogue as equals and on the basis of mutually recognized values and principles. By means of the speech given by its foreign minister in Madrid, Kazakhstan has underlined its allegiance to the OSCE and promised to respect its values and *acquis*. The relieved applause that Marat Tazhin received showed that the Organization is willing to use the potential that the Kazakh Chairmanship offers. If Kazakhstan can utilize the Chairmanship to

develop a political culture of compromise, and justifies the trust shown in it by the OSCE participating States by running a prudent and consistent Chairmanship, this would have an exemplary effect on more than just its Central Asian neighbours. It could demonstrate how a young state, freshly emerged from its transformation process, could use the active policy-shaping opportunities provided by the OSCE to improve its own foreign policy profile. And ultimately everyone could benefit from that – the countries of Central Asia, the EU, and above all the OSCE and its participating States.