
МИР И БЕЗОПАСНОСТЬ

KAZAKHSTAN'S CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE: AN ASSESSMENT

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Massive international comment and analysis was devoted to the Kazakhstan's Chairmanship in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). No previous candidate for this office received such treatment. Kazakhstan's agenda of aims and objectives included important issues. During the year several steps were taken towards implementing Kazakhstan's agenda.

Key words: the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the OSCE summit, Kazakhstan Chairmanship, Kazakh initiatives, the Kyrgyz crisis.

In November 2007, the Foreign Ministers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) unanimously agreed to award Kazakhstan the chairmanship in 2010. However, this show of solidarity belied the deep divisions within the Organization. Some member states — the 'west of Vienna' bloc — were vehemently opposed to Astana's bid to secure the chairmanship. They claimed that the Kazakh government's record on human rights and political reform was so flawed that if it were allowed to head the OSCE it would compromise the credibility of the Organization. Others, however, strongly supported Kazakhstan's candidacy, hoping that it would redress the inequalities and inconsistencies that were undermining the viability of the OSCE. This group, predominantly comprised of members of the CIS, believed that the Organization's agenda had been skewed to serve the political interests and priorities of a privileged group of Western members. They saw engrained bias in the way in which the actions of some states were scrutinized more closely and more critically than those of others. They argued that the OSCE's record on speaking out about such issues as the use of torture, detention without due process of law, electoral fraud and religious discrimination was far from even-handed. This called into question the impartiality of the Organization, thereby damaging its moral authority.

From CSCE to OSCE

The schisms within the OSCE today are a legacy of its Cold War origins. The Organization grew out of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Launched in Helsinki in 1973, this landmark initiative sought to reduce East-West tensions by building economic cooperation and political dialogue between the Soviet Union and its allies on the one hand, and Western bloc states on the other. It led to the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, signed by 33 European states (including micro-states Monaco, San Marino and the Vatican) plus the United States and Canada. The CSCE continued to function on an ad hoc basis until the adoption of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe in 1990. This set in motion a process of institutional change, which was then accelerated by the demise of the Soviet Union in December 1991.

On 1 January 1995 the CSCE was formally re-named the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe. The change of title might have appeared to be relatively innocuous, but in fact it was accompanied by a radical shift in the internal balance of power. Previously, the rival ideological camps had had equal status. However, when the Soviet Union collapsed, this was seen by many as a 'victory' for the West. Concomitantly, the OSCE ceased to be a forum for debate between partners that, despite their political differences, were of equal standing. Instead, it became a two-tiered body in which members on the 'winning' side were regarded as 'superior'. They assumed the right to monitor the performance of the ex-Soviet republics, but seemingly saw no reason to submit their own behaviour to similar scrutiny.

In the first half of the 1990s, all the newly independent ex-Soviet states joined the CSCE/OSCE, as did several former 'Eastern bloc' countries. As a result, within some five years the number of member states rose from 35 to 56. At the same time, there was a giddy surge in the Organization's ambitions. As its name and history indicate, it was conceived as a security-oriented body. From its inception, the concept of 'security' had been interpreted in a comprehensive manner to cover three dimensions: politico-military; economic and environmental; and human. In theory, this integral approach was wise. In practice, however, it led to a lack of focus. By the end of the decade the OSCE was indulging in a scattershot attempt to address every conceivable problem and to be present in every possible trouble spot. Its remit came to include arms control, border management, conflict prevention, military reform, policing, migration management, transport and energy security, hazardous waste disposal, water management, democratization, gender equality, human rights, freedom of movement, freedom of religion, prevention of torture, prevention of human trafficking, media freedom, minority rights and a great many other issues.

This huge catalogue of tasks is a grandiose wish list. It speaks of 'mission creep' rather than a realistic agenda for action. The UN itself, with its multiple agencies and international pool of resources, is unable to address adequately all these problems. They are certainly far beyond the capabilities of a regional Organization such as the OSCE, even though its annual budget has grown vastly over the years. In 1995 it stood at EUR 18.9 million; by 2010, it was set at close on EUR 150.8 million [1]. Meanwhile, the geographic reach of the OSCE has been extended far beyond the confines of Europe,

or even Eurasia, by the institution of 'partners for cooperation' in the Mediterranean region, Asia and Australasia.

Not surprisingly, this massive expansion of activities resulted in a dilution, and indeed a distortion, of the Organization's original aims. On the one hand, much time and effort was now expended on monitoring election proceedings in ex-Soviet states. On the other hand, the propensity of the OSCE to dabble in a wide range of projects, spreading its resources too thinly to be effective, suggested that it was more interested in publicizing its own existence than in making a sustained, meaningful contribution to regional security (see below section on Kyrgyzstan). This lopsided approach gave rise to a perception, especially among CIS members, that the OSCE had lost its sense of purpose, and therefore its relevance, to current challenges. It was against this background of internal division and doubt that Kazakhstan launched its bid for the chairmanship of the OSCE.

Kazakhstan's Bid to Secure the OSCE Chairmanship

When Kazakhstan announced its intention to seek the chairmanship of the OSCE it was subjected to an unprecedented level of hostile scrutiny. Massive international comment and analysis was devoted to the country's problems and shortcomings but relatively little attention was paid to its positive qualities. Equally, Kazakhstan's potential to bring a new perspective to the Organization was largely ignored. No previous candidate for this office received such treatment. Certainly there were, and remain, areas in which the performance of the Kazakh government falls short of the ideals espoused by the OSCE, but it is by no means alone. Very few member states can boast an impeccable record in this respect.

As discussed above, this inquisitorial approach was in large measure a reflection of the unspoken, but palpable, bifurcation of the OSCE into 'good' and 'bad' states. The 'good' states appeared to be outraged that an ex-Soviet state should aspire to the leadership of 'their' Organization — and moreover, that this should be a Eurasian state with a predominantly Muslim population. It required skilful lobbying on the part of the Kazakh government, bolstered by commitments to undertake far-reaching reforms to safeguard civil liberties that finally secured the nomination. Even then, opinion was divided between those who believed that Kazakhstan would genuinely pursue reform and those who were skeptical about its intentions. The same doubts were expressed by human rights activists within Kazakhstan. The debates over Kazakhstan's fitness to assume the chairmanship of the OSCE continued throughout its tenure of office.

Kazakhstan's Strengths

Criticism of Kazakhstan focused chiefly on political issues, such as the conduct of elections, media restrictions and problems with freedom of assembly. These are serious matters, but they are not the only issues which deserve attention. In the field of security, global and regional, Kazakhstan has an impressive track record. In 1992 it ratified the first Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty and became a signatory to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in December 1993. In September 2006,

the historic treaty creating a zone free of nuclear weapons in Central Asia was signed on Kazakhstan's territory. Other important international security initiatives have included President Nazarbayev's proposal to host a 'fuel bank' for nuclear energy.

Another asset that Kazakhstan brought to the OSCE chairmanship was its leading role in a wide range of international organizations, spanning different political, cultural and geographic constituencies. These included the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Organization of Islamic Conference (both of which Kazakhstan would be chairing in the near future), the Eurasian Economic Community, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Economic Cooperation Organization, to name but a few. Thus, it was well placed to facilitate cooperation between the OSCE and these various bodies, particularly in addressing issues of common international concern.

From the perspective of human rights, the treatment of minorities is one of the most important issues. It is highly relevant for the OSCE, since many member states are experiencing rising levels of ethnic and religious discrimination and abuse. This is an area in which Kazakhstan has set a very positive example. It has one of the most ethnically mixed populations in the world, comprising some 130 separate peoples amongst its citizens. It also has adherents of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism and many other faiths. Maintaining peace and harmony in such a complex society is a major challenge. In the 1990s, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, there were widespread fears that the minorities would be ill-treated. This prompted a massive exodus of non-Kazakh peoples, especially Slavs and Germans. However, firm steps were taken to curb incipient xenophobia and the rate of out-migration fell sharply. The situation for minorities in Kazakhstan today is not perfect. Yet while acknowledging that problems of discrimination do sometimes occur, they must not be exaggerated. The reality for most members of ethnic and religious minorities is that in the private as well as the public sphere they enjoy a high degree of civic equality.

One of the mechanisms for achieving this is the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan. Established in 1995, this is an innovative structure to enhance interethnic concord and social stability. Headed by the president, its primary objective is the protection and development of the interests of ethnic minorities within the framework of national policy. A second initiative, inaugurated in 2003, is the tri-annual Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions. This brings together representatives of all the major faith communities. It not only gives visibility and status to the role of religion in society, it also highlights the need for tolerance and dialogue between the different faiths. As President Nazarbayev commented in his opening address at the 2006 Congress, 'Political conflicts can no longer be solved exclusively on the political level.' Thus, inter-faith dialogue is integrated into a broader security-building framework.

Another Kazakh initiative, more directly concerned with conventional security, is the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA). A trans-Asian counterpart to the OSCE, it aims to promote regional cooperation, peace, confidence and friendship. After a ten-year period of gestation, the first summit was held in 2002. Currently it comprises 22 participating states, reaching across the Middle East, South and South-East Asia. One of the successes of this body is that it brings to-

gether representatives of polities that have ongoing disputes, such as Iran, Israel and the Palestinian Autonomous Areas, India and Pakistan. There are sometimes tough and difficult exchanges between the participants, but the very fact that they meet on a regular basis keeps the door open for quiet efforts to build bridges and to overcome differences.

It would be easy to dismiss these initiatives as mere political window dressing. Yet this would under-estimate the importance of fostering an environment in which such qualities as tolerance and mutual respect are publicly endorsed by the state. While it may not be possible to replicate such projects elsewhere, the underlying rationale merits attention. It is surely worth considering how it might be applied in other societies. President Nazarbayev has stressed the need to seek 'what is common rather than what divides us'. This is not an insignificant contribution to building stability and security in the face of the complex spectrum of conventional and non-conventional, internal and external threats that confront the world today.

Kazakhstan's OSCE Agenda 2010

Kazakhstan's motto for its chairmanship was a catchy, alliterative set of watchwords: Trust, Tradition, Transparency, Tolerance. These four 'T's represented the conceptual cornerstones of its mission. The first — a basic necessity; the second — commitment to the fundamental principles and values of the OSCE; the third — maximum openness and transparency in international relations, free from 'double standards' and 'dividing lines', as well as a focus on constructive co-operation in order to address challenges and threats to security; and the fourth — the strengthening of intercultural and inter-civilizational dialogue [6]. Its agenda of aims and objectives included such issues as improving mechanisms for combating the trafficking of narcotics and human beings; promoting good governance at border crossings; developing secure and efficient land transportation; addressing migration and energy security; creating a comprehensive system for monitoring and responding to environmental threats; consolidating the OSCE strategy for Afghanistan; securing Afghan borders along boundaries with OSCE member states and supporting cross-border trade; and the strengthening of Afghan law enforcement agencies — to name but a few of the stated priorities for the year.

The presentational skills that were employed to promote this programme were impressive. However, the substance was vague, strong on aspiration, ambitious in scope but weak on concrete detail. This was not surprising: it merely exemplified the prevailing tendency in the OSCE to want to do more than could realistically be accomplished. Inevitably, during the year only small, mainly symbolic steps were taken towards implementing Kazakhstan's agenda. Conferences and seminars were held on a number of issues. The most significant of these were the meeting in Corfu on European security, and the major gathering in Almaty on the International Fund for Salvation of the Aral Sea. Other notable activities included Chairman-in-Office Kanat Saudabayev's assiduous pursuit of conflict resolution and peace-building in Nagorno-Karabagh, Trans(d)nistria and Afghanistan. These efforts did not produce any breakthrough agreements, but they did keep the process of dialogue alive. However, the long-standing and

potentially explosive conflict in Cyprus — a founder OSCE member — was ignored. This was not surprising: the OSCE has consistently failed to pay adequate attention to problems, however serious, in the notionally ‘good’ states of the former ‘Western bloc’.

OSCE Response to Kyrgyz Conflict: A Case of Institutional Failure

Soon after Kazakhstan assumed the chairmanship, the OSCE was confronted with a major crisis in Kyrgyzstan. Problems began in January 2010, when big price hikes were introduced for heating, electricity and hot water [2]. Anti-government demonstrations soon followed and in early April, the capital was engulfed by a wave of looting and arson. At the same time, thousands of anti-government demonstrators gathered in the main square. Government troops opened fire on the crowd, killing 89 people (official estimate) and injuring more than 1,500. Incumbent President Kurmanbek Bakiev fled to the south of the county and an interim government under Roza Otunbayeva was installed. Shortly after, Kurmanbek Bakiev resigned and Kazakhstan, in its capacity as OSCE chairman, joined with Russia and the US to facilitate his evacuation to Belarus. This temporarily halted the violence.

However, in May, there were more clashes in southern Kyrgyzstan and in June, the situation escalated into a brutal conflict between the Kyrgyz and the local Uzbek population (who hold Kyrgyz citizenship). In mid-June some 100,000 Uzbeks from Kyrgyzstan — mostly women, children, the elderly and the injured — fled across the border into Uzbekistan to seek asylum. In addition, another 300,000 people, mostly ethnic Uzbeks, fled to other parts of Kyrgyzstan. The death toll was officially set at around 400, but unofficial estimates suggested a figure of at least 2,000. Many people suffered serious injuries and the devastation of homes and infrastructure was colossal. There were numerous Kyrgyz casualties but the overwhelming majority of the victims were ethnic Uzbeks.

Uzbekistan played a decisive role in stabilizing the situation [7]. When huge numbers of homeless, traumatized people began streaming across the border, the authorities swiftly set up triage centres and provided food, shelter and medical care. Equally importantly, Uzbek President Islam Karimov refused to categorize the conflict as an ethnic confrontation. He publicly stressed the historic bonds between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks and condemned impromptu acts of revenge, making it clear that they would not be tolerated. This was crucial, since many Uzbek citizens, incensed by the vicious attacks on the refugees, wanted to take the law into their own hands and to carry out cross-border revenge attacks. This would almost certainly have triggered an inter-state confrontation. At the end of June, when the situation in Kyrgyzstan was more stable, the Uzbek authorities facilitated the return of the refugees to their place of origin.

Shortly after Uzbekistan had begun to accept the refugees, international humanitarian agencies also responded to the crisis in Kyrgyzstan. The lead role was taken by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, but several other organizations played a major part, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization. The regional security organizations — the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) — were prevented by their mandates from intervention in

the domestic affairs of another state. Thus, they were able to provide some humanitarian assistance, but not to undertake military or peacekeeping operations.

The OSCE, in contrast to the other regional security bodies, was surely ideally placed to take action to avert, or at least mitigate, the Kyrgyz crisis. A relatively well funded and staffed OSCE Centre had been operating in Bishkek since January 1999, with a remit that prioritized the human and political aspects of security and stability, specifically stressing the importance of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation [8]. A Field Office had been established in Osh in April 2000 and in 2003, the OSCE Police Assistance Programme for Kyrgyzstan was launched. This was highly rated, and said to have 'improved the operational efficiency of the Kyrgyz Police ... built a strong basis for further cooperation between the OSCE and the Ministry of the Interior, and created a basis for continued police assistance through the Interim Police Assistance Programme (IPAP)' [5]. Other projects in Kyrgyzstan included the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, with a curriculum that covered expert training and education in conflict prevention, management, resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation. Nevertheless, despite all these programmes and activities, involving close cooperation with the Kyrgyz authorities and population, the OSCE failed to foresee the looming crisis.

In July, after the violence had begun to subside, Kazakhstan hosted an informal meeting of OSCE Foreign Ministers, during which it was decided to offer the deployment of an unarmed police force in the south of Kyrgyzstan. However, there was strong opposition to this proposal within the country, especially in the area where the police force was to be deployed. After considerable delay, it was agreed that the operation should be scaled-down [9]. It was not till the end of December that a modest advisory police group finally began to arrive. The idea of an independent OSCE investigation into the violence also received a hostile reception. A compromise solution was proposed, whereby representatives of OSCE member states would conduct an investigation, but it would not be officially classified as an OSCE project.

In all, the Kyrgyz crisis provided a stark illustration of the Organization's limitations. It was unable to offer early warning, let alone conflict prevention on the territory of a member state. Even the provision of post-conflict support was highly problematic.

OSCE Summit

One of the priorities that Kazakhstan earmarked for its chairmanship was to convene a summit of OSCE members. By a fortunate coincidence, this would mark the anniversaries of two pivotal events in the Organization's history: the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe in 1990. Furthermore, it would be the first such meeting since the 1999 Istanbul Summit. However, the Kazakh proposal received a lukewarm reception from other member states. It was not until August that the OSCE Ministerial Council endorsed the proposal to hold a summit in Astana on 1—2 December 2010 [4]. Even then, there was uncertainty as to who would attend, as many states were reluctant to send senior government representatives. The full list of participants was not finally confirmed until shortly before the event. This

lack of enthusiasm for engaging in a high level debate about common concerns was an indication of the extent to which institutional apathy and complacency had become entrenched in the Organization.

It was a triumph for Kazakh diplomacy that despite all the hesitations and uncertainties, senior officials (including many heads of state) from all the OSCE member and partner states, as well as several international organizations did attend the Astana Summit. Yet the event was marked by tensions, acrimony and a paucity of substantive outcomes. There was little or no progress on the agenda items that Kazakhstan had prioritized. Thus, the only advance in resolving 'frozen conflicts' was a joint declaration by the OSCE Minsk group (Russia, US, France, Armenia and Azerbaijan) on the Karabagh conflict.

A key objective of the summit was to reach consensus on a joint action plan. Chairman-in-Office Saudabayev had urged member states to work constructively to formulate agreed positions on three key issues: threats and challenges in the OSCE's area of responsibility; an effective plan for overcoming them; and a strategic vision for the development of a common Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security architecture. As a preparatory step, the Kazakh side had drafted a working agenda itemizing the main issues to be addressed. These were in large part a re-iteration of the list of topics that it had highlighted when it assumed office, including terrorism, drug trafficking, the Aral Sea and other environmental problems, the war in Afghanistan, ethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan, nuclear non-proliferation, and regional conflicts. The aim was to establish agreed positions. Far from promoting accord, however, the ensuing debate once again highlighted the deep divisions between the member states. Thus, instead of a robust action plan the final document was an anodyne statement of intent, the Astana Commemorative Declaration Towards a Security Community [3].

Conclusions

It was a decisive point in the history of the OSCE when Kazakhstan was nominated chairman, thereby breaking through 'the glass ceiling' to score a triple first as a predominantly Muslim, Eurasian and CIS member state to assume this responsibility. Not surprisingly, there was much speculation as to how the Kazakh government would fulfill its new role. Some hoped that it would promote a more liberal attitude to human rights within the country. They were disappointed: the Kazakh authorities continued to implement the measures that they believed to be consistent with national security and stability, paying little attention to external criticisms. On the other hand, fears that Astana would act as a mouthpiece for the CIS, and more particularly for Moscow, proved to be groundless. On the contrary, it maintained an admirably independent, evenly-balanced approach.

The arena in which Kazakhstan did try to effect change was within the Organization itself. Specifically, it tried to restore an integral concept of security by re-calibrating the balance between the different dimensions. This was an important corrective since, as discussed above, the activities of the OSCE had come to be dominated by a selective focus on civil and political rights. This was characterized by unequal scrutiny of the member states. Ongoing critical attention was focused on problems in the CIS

area, while shortcomings in other parts of the OSCE territory were downplayed. This was not only divisive, but it failed to address adequately the range of real and actual threats that were emerging throughout the region.

The Astana Summit was a bold attempt to galvanize the OSCE into implementing the principles enshrined in Kazakhstan's signature motto of the four 'T's — Trust, Tradition, Transparency and Tolerance. It sought to move beyond 'double standards' and 'dividing lines' and instead to focus on constructive co-operation in order to address concrete challenges and threats to security. In particular, Astana recognized the need to give urgency and substance to a new, comprehensive vision of security, encompassing the entire Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space. The summit failed to live up to these challenges. This was not due to a lack of effort on the part of Kazakhstan, but to the difficulty in finding common ground on fundamental concepts — surely a sign of grave malaise within the Organization. Another sign of inherent weakness and lack of 'fitness for purpose' was the ineffectiveness of the response to the Kyrgyz conflict. Despite many years of active engagement in the country the OSCE proved unable to offer any serious assistance before, during or after the crisis. Looking more widely at the regional setting, Kazakhstan's chairmanship provided unique opportunities for facilitating contacts with bodies such as the SCO, CICA, CSTO and EURASEC. However, within the OSCE there was little enthusiasm for reaching out to these organizations, despite the considerable overlap in areas of interest and concern.

To summarize, Kazakhstan's chairmanship was not marked by major breakthroughs or accomplishments. This is not unusual: it is difficult to think of a single past chairman of the OSCE that achieved lasting success with any part of its agenda. Yet Kazakhstan's term of office was not insignificant. Its great contribution was that it brought new energy and a new perspective to the Organization. It initiated processes that offered a way of moving forward, of overcoming yesterday's strains and rifts in order to focus on the pressing issues of today's world. The chairmanship has now passed to Lithuania, but Kazakhstan remains part of the Troika of past, present and future holders of the post. Thus, it will still be able to advance some of the goals that it set out in its agenda for the previous year. Yet it remains to be seen whether the momentum for change and renewal can be maintained. This will depend on the ability of the OSCE to summon up the collective will to transform itself into an Organization that has relevance for the 21st century.

NOTES

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- [2] For a detailed chronology and analysis of the conflict see: S. Akiner Kyrgyzstan: A Regional Analysis, A Write net Report commissioned by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Emergency Preparedness and Response Section, August 2010, to be made available in due course on the UNHCR RefWorld website // www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher,WRITENET,KGZ
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ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЬСТВО КАЗАХСТАНА В ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ПО БЕЗОПАСНОСТИ И СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВУ В ЕВРОПЕ: ОЦЕНКА ЭКСПЕРТА

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Многочисленные международные комментарии и аналитические исследования были посвящены председательству Казахстана в Организации по безопасности и сотрудничеству в Европе (ОБСЕ). Ни один из предыдущих кандидатов на этот пост не подвергался такому пристальному изучению. Казахстан предложил в повестку дня цели и задачи, включавшие важные вопросы. В течение года были предприняты несколько шагов по выполнению казахстанской повестки дня.

Ключевые слова: Организация по безопасности и сотрудничеству в Европе, саммит ОБСЕ, председательство Казахстана, казахские инициативы, киргизский кризис.