Kazakhstan Holds the OSCE Chair

On January 1, 2010, Kazakhstan assumed the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), an organization that includes 56 countries, including the United States. Kazakhstan is the first Central Asian, post-Soviet, and predominantly Muslim state to chair the OSCE, an organization that celebrates its 35th birthday this year.

At the Ministerial Meeting in Athens in December 2009, Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev of Kazakhstan reiterated the proposal of President Nursultan Nazarbayev that the OSCE hold a summit of heads of state and government during 2010. The last OSCE Summit took place in November 1999 in Istanbul and marked the 25th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and the 10th anniversary of the Paris Charter for a New Europe. However, the last decade has witnessed the emergence of novel security challenges that necessitate closer consultation among OSCE capitals in addressing these threats. A heads-of-state summit in 2010 would provide the ideal venue and opportunity for fashioning greater security coordination among participating national leaders.

Background: 1999 Istanbul Summit Results

The last OSCE Summit was held in Istanbul in 1999 under the Turkish chairmanship. The decision to have the summit hosted by Turkey prompted some concern over Ankara’s failure to implement a wide range of OSCE human dimension commitments. The U.S. Helsinki Commission concluded months before the summit that there had been no demonstrable improvement in Ankara’s human rights practices. Some observers believed that Ankara’s shortcomings in resolving longstanding human rights issues would have a negative impact on the credibility of the OSCE and would be a potential embarrassment for the U.S. president in participating in such a summit in Istanbul.

These concerns were misguided, and the Istanbul Summit proved to be a landmark in the development of the OSCE and its fundamental principles, as well as in Turkey’s own progress toward the European mainstream. A similar opportunity has now emerged in hosting an OSCE summit in Kazakhstan.

The Istanbul Summit adopted a Charter for European Security in order to strengthen security and stability in the OSCE region and to improve the operational capabilities of the organization. The charter included a number of important steps toward strengthening the OSCE’s ability to prevent armed conflicts, as well as its capacity to mediate conflicts and rehabilitate societies ravaged by war. It listed the common challenges to OSCE participating states, such as armed clashes, international terrorism, organized crime, and economic and environmental problems.

The Charter for European Security and the Istanbul Summit Declaration focused on the security challenges at the time, including the volatile situation in Kosovo, the shortcomings of democratization in Yugoslavia, and the simmering conflicts in the Caucasus. After the Western Balkan wars ended, the security situation in and around Europe changed precipitously.

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States dramatically altered the security landscape of Europe, Eurasia, and the wider world. In particular, the conflict in Afghanistan has directly affected the entire OSCE region, and the organization itself is becoming involved in election
monitoring and border security programs. As a result of these developments, it is imperative that the OSCE member states take stock of what has been achieved by the organization in the last 10 years, to assess OSCE capabilities in various arenas, and decide on the OSCE’s future direction.

The charter also outlined common responses and principles for cooperation with other organizations dealing with conflict resolution. The charter reaffirmed the full adherence of all participating states to previous OSCE documents, which represented their individual and common commitments. Human rights, including the rights of national minorities, formed an important part of the charter. The participating states rejected any form of ethnic cleansing or mass population expulsions and reaffirmed their commitment to respect the rights of asylum seekers. They pledged to undertake measures to eliminate discrimination against women and to end all forms of trafficking in human beings. The signatories of the charter also reaffirmed their obligation to conduct free and fair elections in accordance with OSCE commitments and underscored the importance of an independent media and the free flow of information, as well as the public’s access to information.

In sum, according to the Charter for European Security, the participating states committed themselves to undertake the following concrete steps:

- Adopt a Platform for Cooperative Security, in order to further strengthen cooperation between the OSCE and other international organizations and institutions on the basis of equality and in a spirit of partnership;
- Develop the OSCE’s role in peacekeeping operations;
- Create Rapid Expert Assistance and Cooperation Teams (REACT), enabling the OSCE to swiftly respond to requests from participating states for civilian and police expertise in conflict situations. This would give the OSCE the ability to address problems before they become crises and to rapidly deploy the civilian components of a peacekeeping operation when needed;
- Expand the OSCE’s ability to carry out police-related activities, including police monitoring and training and promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in general;
- Establish an Operation Center at the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna in order to facilitate effective preparation and planning of rapid deployment of OSCE field operations; and
- Form a Preparatory Committee under the direction of the OSCE Permanent Council in order to strengthen the consultation process within the OSCE.

Importance of an OSCE Summit in 2010

Amid growing questions about the OSCE’s international role and given the new security threats that confront the entire OSCE region, a summit assembling all heads of state during 2010 would reconfirm OSCE commitments to the principles and the spirit of the Helsinki Final Act, the Paris Charter, and the OSCE acquis as a whole. Moreover, it could comprehensively review the existing OSCE toolbox with the aim of consolidating or updating effective mechanisms and crafting new and more effective tools. Specifically, the summit could focus on four important goals:

- First, take stock of what the OSCE has accomplished in enhancing international security, assess OSCE capabilities in all three of its dimensions, and begin to develop some consensus on the most important future OSCE missions.
- Second, assess the existing security threats within and around the OSCE area and formulate more effective common responses through the pursuit of the OSCE’s three dimensions:
security, economy, and human rights. For instance, the organization can make a significant and practical contribution in Afghanistan through the training of border patrols, police officers, and the national administration.

- Third, examine the role and capabilities of other security organizations active in the OSCE region, including NATO, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), in such areas as conflict prevention, humanitarian assistance, and post-conflict reconstruction, and devise ways to improve cooperation among them.

- Fourth, promote the integration process between Central Asia and the Euro-Atlantic sphere for the benefit of both regions, particularly through energy, trade, and business connections.

By focusing on these four goals, the 2010 OSCE Summit can provide a strong impetus to reinvigorate the organization, foster consensus among OSCE states on common threats, provide a platform to address these challenges, and concentrate on practical pressing issues such as the development of the Corfu process, Afghanistan’s reconstruction, energy security; and the pursuit of a transatlantic, European, and Eurasian security dialogue.

**Developing the Corfu Process**

The “Corfu Process” was launched in June 2009 at an informal meeting of OSCE foreign ministers on the Greek island of Corfu. It aims to restore international confidence and develop a constructive dialogue on broad European security issues. Following the Corfu meeting, OSCE ambassadors have met regularly in Vienna to develop the dialogue. At the OSCE Ministerial Council in Athens in December 2009, participating states reaffirmed their commitment to continuing the Corfu Process. However, the Corfu Process itself is not sufficient to address the complex security challenges confronting the OSCE states.

At the Athens meeting, OSCE foreign ministers also discussed Russian president Dmitry Medvedev’s proposals on European security and concluded that as the only regional organization bringing together all states in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian areas, and with its extensive experience as a negotiating platform, the OSCE is the natural anchor for such a dialogue. Similar recommendations were made soon after Moscow announced its proposal in 2008 by French president Nikolas Sarkozy and subsequently by the NATO-Russia Council in December 2009.

**Securing Afghanistan**

Coordinating efforts on state building in Afghanistan can be a central issue for the 2010 OSCE Summit. It is also an issue that has the potential to forge consensus among all member states by raising several practical questions, including the long-term impact of the conflict in Afghanistan on European and Eurasian security and the significance of OSCE assistance to Afghanistan in training border guards, election monitoring, administrative reform, and institutional development. In addition, the transit corridor for NATO supplies to Afghanistan has elevated the strategic importance of the Central Asian states and can provide additional impetus to closer European-Eurasian collaboration. The summit would serve to assess broader regional security threats such as international terrorism and the drug trade and examine how Kazakhstan and other Central Asian states can reinforce their role as security providers.

**Enhancing Energy and Water Security**
Energy security has emerged as a priority issue as numerous OSCE members are involved in the supply and transit of Caspian Basin energy, particularly concerning the security of transport of crude oil and natural gas to Europe. New security arrangements can be discussed at the summit to help codify the commitments of signatories to legal and regulatory instruments to protect the rights of producers, consumers, and transit countries.

Water and hydroelectric power are also major questions in Central Asia as these countries will need trade agreements, legal assistance, technological help, and political support to pursue cooperative efforts and prevent water from becoming a source of interstate conflict that will further undermine security in the broader region. Both Russia and China also have a direct stake in resolving disputes over water supplies and devising a viable plan for resource sharing. The OSCE can provide a valuable venue for pursuing the principles of a treaty on water resources.

**Promoting Trans-regional Security Dialogue**

The OSCE Summit can address the core issue of European and Eurasian security and place the recent proposal of Russian president Medvedev in a broader strategic context. However, the objective of the summit should not be to forge an over-ambitious European Security Pact or an unnecessary new “security architecture.” Instead, it needs to examine the “security foundations” and provides a unique opportunity to recommit all member states to the core values of the OSCE, including the democracy agenda, national security, state sovereignty, and international cooperation. Furthermore, the summit can reiterate the role and importance of existing security organizations and security treaties, including the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty and the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, and examine ways to resolve a number of simmering conflicts in the OSCE region, especially in the Caucasus.

**Summit Outcomes**

In addition to the practical projects and commitments of member states, participants at the 2010 Summit should aim to issue an OSCE declaration on supporting state-stabilizing efforts in Afghanistan and specify the importance of Central Asia in securing the broader region while working closely with the NATO allies. The summit can also produce a renewed 2010 Charter for European Security that specifies the common principles and goals of the organization and underscores the basis of cooperation with other multinational organizations. These outcomes will raise the stature and impact of the OSCE, enable Kazakhstan to enhance its role in promoting European and Eurasian security, and bring European and Central Asian interests closer together.