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Fifteen Years of Transformation in Central Asia and the OSCE

One central element in the crisis of the OSCE¹ is the question of the relationship between the Organization's Western participating States and the leaders of those states that accuse it of pursuing a one-sided policy against them, consisting in enforcing the "human dimension" (democracy, rule of law, and human rights) in a way that infringes basic principles of the Helsinki Final Act, "such as non-intervention in internal affairs and respect for the sovereignty of nations".² Of course, this rebuke is aimed at the West. The Western countries continue to insist that all OSCE States have to conform to the CSCE Charter of Paris for a New Europe of 1990, in which the participating States "undertake to build, consolidate and strengthen democracy as the *only* system of government of our nations".³

"The key problem [...] seems to be disagreement over the human dimension."⁴ How to overcome this central contradiction is indeed the biggest question. It is one that needs to be answered by not only all sides within the OSCE, but by Europe as a whole. For both, the search for a compromise solution is extremely important, as Europe should prepare itself to take on a new policy field: dealing with the Euro-Asiatic continental space. By means of the OSCE, Europe has expanded its political borders to China and Afghanistan. On its southern flanks, this Euro-Asiatic area is bordered by a belt of Islamic states.

Europe, the Russian Federation, Central Asia, China, India: The scale of the emerging shared Euro-Asiatic continental space is unique. It amounts to Europe's most important "strategic reserve" in every regard. If Europe wants "to become self-determined in this world"⁵ and "to achieve global actor-

1 Cf. *Managing Change in Europe – Evaluating the OSCE and Its Future Role: Competencies, Capabilities, and Missions*, compiled by Wolfgang Zellner, CORE Working Paper No. 13, Hamburg 2005, reprinted in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2005*, pp. 389-430.

2 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Information and Press Department, Statement by CIS Member Countries on the State of Affairs in the OSCE, Moscow, 3 July 2004, at: http://www.in.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/3be4758c05585a09c3256ecc00255a52?OpenDocument. The statement was signed by nine CIS states, but not by Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkmenistan, and was presented to the Permanent Council of the OSCE on 8 July 2004 by the Russian delegation.

3 Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, Charter of Paris for a New Europe, Paris, 21 November 1990, in: Arie Bloed (ed.), *The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Analysis and Basic Documents, 1972-1993*, Dordrecht 1993, pp. 141-217, here: p. 537 (emphasis added).

4 *Managing Change*, cited above, (Note 1), p. 15.

5 Egon Bahr, Europas strategische Interessen [Europe's Strategic Interests], in: *Internationale Politik* 4/2007, pp. 86-97, here: p. 93 (this and all subsequent translations from non-English sources by the author).

hood”,⁶ as it appears determined to do, strategic partnerships in this area will be *the* central condition. That is particularly true in the context of transatlantic relations, as Egon Bahr, the architect of the Federal Republic of Germany’s policy of détente vis-à-vis the Eastern bloc in the 1960s and 1970s, describes: “The closeness that we experienced during the Cold War between America and Europe will never be recaptured.”⁷ As a result, Bahr concludes: “The only way for Europe to achieve self-determination is by emancipating itself from America.”⁸ And furthermore: “It is Europe’s responsibility to ensure that ‘co-operation’ is the keyword of our century.”⁹

European self-determination, the Euro-Asiatic continental area, strategic partnerships, co-operation as the keyword of our century: If, in terms of these premises, one examines how, after 15 years of transformation in Central Asia, the geostrategic heart of this area, the socio-political environment, the character of the ruling elites, and their preconditions for co-operation have developed, and if one compares the situation today with the conditions that prevailed when the Charter of Paris was signed, bearing in mind the West’s Central Asia transformation strategy, a picture emerges that is described in the following section.

New Regional and National Identities

Fifteen years of transformation have radically changed Central Asia, its societies, and the living conditions of the roughly 60 million people and 40 ethnic groups that live there. The most important result of the transformation period is that, for the first time in their history, they possess their own states and are in charge of their own national destinies. For the peoples of this region, this is a major historical watershed.

At the same time, a process has begun to restore Central Asia’s traditional geopolitical place and role as a bridge between eastern and south-western Asia, Russia, and Europe. In the course of this process, the region’s traditional civilizational, cultural, and religious face has rapidly reasserted itself. On the one hand, Islam and the Muslim character of the majority of the population are becoming increasingly prominent – between 60 and 90 per cent of the populations of each country are practising Muslims. On the other hand, the secularism inherited from the Soviet period appears to have relatively deep and firm roots, as reflected in the state-building processes. All the Central Asian states have secular constitutions. The need to avoid conflict between secularism and Islam is one of the key issues facing the region in the future.

6 Ibid., p. 88.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., p. 87.

Over the last 15 years, the countries of Central Asia have developed close co-operative relations with their most important southern and eastern neighbours: China, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey. As a result, Central Asia is gradually returning to the circle of Islamic states to which it historically belonged. With the exception of Turkmenistan, all the Central Asian countries are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, which also counts China and Russia as members, and India, Iran, and Pakistan as observers.

The West has been insistent in its attempts to influence internal transformation processes, which will be the subject of further discussion below.

Transformation and Western Pressure

In evaluating the Western transformation strategy it is important not to neglect the political, economic, and theoretical climate that predominated in the West during the period following the break up of the Soviet Union.

For the West, the transformation of socialist systems into capitalist ones was a political project from the start. The priority was the irrevocable uprooting of all political and economic foundations of the socialist social system. Attempts at restoration of whatever kind had to be forestalled. The most certain way of achieving this appeared to be reforms that created facts on the ground as directly and rapidly as possible, without what could be called “evolutionary delays”: the implantation of a market economy and a Western-style political system. It was therefore also necessary to open the doors to outside influence in the young states of the post-Soviet area to enforce the implementation of these reforms.

Theoretical discussions at that time over the best way to “manage” transformation became intertwined with those on the repercussions of globalization for international relations and politics. In foreign policy practice, a kind of “post-national” conceptual approach began to predominate. It assumed that “the role of the nation state has been considerably relativized by the increased importance of human rights and the globalization of the economy and society”¹⁰, and that the nation state’s powers in a number of strategic aspects of sovereignty (democracy, human rights, rule of law; economic and financial policy) should be restricted and opened to intervention by external actors.

This “post-national” approach was diametrically opposed to the task of creating nation states in Central Asia for the first time. It was strengthened by the view that democracy is also a guarantee of security. The prominent German peace researcher Ernst-Otto Czempiel recommended that democratiza-

10 Address by Joschka Fischer, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, at the Fifty-fourth Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, 22 September 1999, at: <http://www.germany.info/relaunch/politics/speeches/092299.html>.

tion be made the “primary and central topic” of foreign policy: “After all, if all the political systems in the Euro-Atlantic system are democratized and developed, i.e. if the same states and conditions that characterize the Atlantic community prevail everywhere, the problem of comprehensive security is solved, and stability and non-violence are permanently guaranteed. Non-violent, interventionist contributions to the democratization of all political systems must become the heart of foreign policy in global civil society [...] German foreign policy must give the strategy of democratization the highest priority.”¹¹

The theoretical discourse also created links of conditionality between democracy and market economy. “The only condition under which a market system and democracy can be *implanted simultaneously* and can come to thrive is when they are forced upon a society *from outside* and guaranteed in the long term by international relations of dependency.”¹²

In this way, a package approach came into existence that aimed at the simultaneous transformation of all political, economic, and social systems in a “frontal assault”. As Madeleine Albright expressed it in a speech of April 2000 in Tashkent: “The best way to take a bitter pill is simply to swallow it whole.”¹³

According to this approach, the strategic links in the chain were “the revolutionary installation of an entrepreneurial class”,¹⁴ the determined and comprehensive privatization of state and collectively owned property; the introduction of the instruments of a market economy; where possible, a change of elite; the reorganization of the political system as a representative democracy and with its characteristic division of powers.

By means of international organizations and bilateral relations, the West thus exerted considerable pressure on all transformation processes and on the leaderships of the Central Asian states that had to implement them. The OSCE as “one of the agents of change”¹⁵ has played and continues to play a central role in this scenario. By considering the human dimension as “the core of efforts to guarantee comprehensive security”¹⁶ in Central Asia, the

11 Otto Czempel, *Interventionen in Zeiten der Interdependenz* [Interventions in the Age of Interdependence], in: Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (ed.), *HSFK-Report 2/2000*, Frankfurt am Main, p. 22.

12 Carl Offe, *Tunnel am Ende des Lichts. Erkundungen der politischen Transformation im Neuen Osten* [Tunnel at the End of the Light. Inquiries into the Political Transformation of the New East], New York 1994, p. 65 (author's emphasis).

13 *Speech by the Secretary of State, Madeleine K. Albright*, University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Tashkent, April 7, 2000.

14 Offe, cited above (Note 12), p. 60.

15 *Managing Change*, cited above (Note 1), p. 12.

16 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *OSCE Meetings on Human Dimension Issues 1999-2001. A compilation of final reports from OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings and Human Dimension Seminars*, Warsaw 2001, p. 7.

OSCE made itself one of the central supports of the Western strategy towards the societies and leaders of Central Asia.¹⁷

The Qualities and Dynamics of Internal Transformation Processes

Influenced by the political culture, social hierarchies and loyalties with deep historical roots, and economic conditions in each country, the transformation process proceeded differently in each case. In Turkmenistan, for instance, progress was minimal, while in Kazakhstan, the results have been substantial. Overall, the following picture has emerged:¹⁸

Regional Differentiation

After 15 years, a certain degree of differentiation is evident: Kazakhstan, thanks to its rich reserves of oil and gas and extensive market reforms, and Turkmenistan, with its large fossil fuel resources, stand out. Kazakhstan, (at 2.7 million km² the ninth largest country on earth) has become something of a regional power. The proven reserves of its three largest oil fields comprise around 53 billion barrels. Kazakhstan also possesses around six per cent of the world's iron ore reserves, and is responsible for some 2.3 percent of copper production. With a population of only 15.2 million, Kazakhstan has received direct investment of 28.4 billion US dollars since 1993. That amounts to 80 per cent of all inward investment in Central Asia. GDP growth in recent years was around nine per cent.

At the other pole are the least economically developed states: Kyrgyzstan and, in the far south-east of Central Asia, Tajikistan.

Uzbekistan occupies an intermediate position. All three states border on the Fergana Valley, a conflict zone steeped in traditional Islam. They appear to be developing into a geo-political group.

On the Economic and Political Consequences of Transformation

In the economy, the transformation has been systemic. While the extent differs from country to country, radical economic reforms and extensive privatization have been implemented, the private sector has been boosted, and most currencies are freely convertible. In general, the foundations of market economies have been laid, and the possibility of returning to a socialist economic system can be effectively ruled out.

17 "Human dimension issues have become the most important fields of activity of the OSCE." In: *Managing Change*, cited above (Note 1), p. 26.

18 For a more comprehensive analysis see: *Pyatnadsat let, kotorie izmenili Tsentralnyu Aziyu* [Fifteen Years that Have Transformed Central Asia], International Centre for Strategic and Political Studies, Moscow 2006.

The same is true in the political sphere. Despite the existence of many limitations, basic democratic structures are present in every state: a democratic constitution, parliament, jurisprudence, multiple parties, NGOs, and parliamentary and presidential elections.

Nevertheless, these countries are still dominated by authoritarian regimes led by powerful presidents. However, here too, a degree of variety should not be overlooked: from totalitarian, as in Turkmenistan, to a kind of “enlightened guided democracy”, as in Kazakhstan.

Measured against the criteria of representative democracy, however, the political transformation shows serious weaknesses: There is no genuine separation of powers, no system of checks and balances to keep the power of the state under control, human and civic rights are restricted and often brutally violated, media freedom is limited, democratic means for the transfer of power do not exist, the system of parties, trade unions, and NGOs is weak and is still not fully integrated into the parliamentary system. A report by the Bertelsmann Foundation estimates that “with the exception of the Communist parties, no party possesses either a broad membership or a stable basis in society.”¹⁹

Particularly damaging for the future development of the individual states and the region as a whole is the monopolizing of power in the hands of relatively small ruling groups whose focus lies on particular interests. This leads to a high degree of particularist narrowness, which particularly hampers the development of the regional co-operation that is vital for the development of the whole region.

The Economic Consequences of Transformation for the State-Formation Process

Most of the Central Asian states, with the exception of Kazakhstan (at least according to Kazakh publications), experienced rapid economic decline following the dismantling of the Soviet Union. From the mid-1990s, a relative recovery took place, though levels equivalent to the late Soviet period were not achieved. On average, GDP growth from 1997 to 2001 averaged 6.1 per cent.²⁰

In Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and, to some extent, Uzbekistan, privatization of the former state sector and the weakening of the collectivized sector led to deindustrialization. The bulk of the means of production is worn-out and uncompetitive. Foreign investments are generally not being made in the development of industry, but in the exploitation of energy resources.

19 Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.), *Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2003*, Gütersloh, 2004, p. 163 (author’s translation).

20 Cf. Asian Development Bank, *Asian Development Outlook 2005*, at: <http://www.adb.org/Documents/books/ADO/2005/default.asp>.

With the exception of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, who can rely on profits and a certain boost to their industrial sectors thanks to revenue accumulation as a result of their oil and gas resources, the Central Asian states thus find themselves in the same economic situation as most developing countries. They are namely reliant on the extraction and export of raw materials: energy sources (fossil fuels [3.3 per cent of global natural gas reserves] and hydroelectric power), precious metals, cotton, ore, aluminium, and uranium (19.7 per cent of global reserves).

The strategic dangers of this one-sided economic profile are well-known: technical underdevelopment, a high degree of dependence on fluctuations in the prices of raw materials, unemployment, and environmental degradation. In addition, all the profits from the export of raw materials are appropriated by a small circle of entrepreneurs, which leads to a weak internal market and exacerbates social polarization.

In other words, after the collapse of the division of labour that characterized the USSR, the transformation strategy was not focused on the creation of a solid basis for the self-sustaining economic development of the young states.

Effects of Transformation on the Quality of Life of the Population

There can be no doubt that transformation has drastically reduced the quality of life of the population. Central Asia remains far from fulfilling the UN millennium goals for social development. Poverty is a fundamental problem throughout the region. For instance, the proportion of the population with a daily income of less than one US dollar was 56.6 per cent in Tajikistan, 40.8 per cent in Kyrgyzstan (both 2003), 27.5 per cent in Uzbekistan (2000), and 27.9 per cent in Kazakhstan (2002).²¹ The above-mentioned report by the Bertelsmann Foundation estimates that “everywhere the social divide is growing wider [...] Poverty is spreading, especially in rural areas, and is increasingly including a gender component [...] The formerly large potential for education is disappearing.”²² The report diagnoses “sclerosis of the education and social systems and increasing poverty.”²³

No Change to the Basic Social Framework

Social subsystems remain trapped in patriarchal social structures with specific leadership mechanisms characterized by a social “pyramid” with a strong leader at the apex, who holds the system together by means of a hierarchical system of relations consisting of traditional loyalties and material

21 Asian Development Bank, *Basic Statistics 2006*, at: <http://www.adb.org/Statistics/pdf/Basic-Statistics-2006-Web.pdf>.

22 Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.), cited above (Note 18), p. 172 (author’s translation).

23 Ibid., p. 174 (author’s translation).

bonds. The reference point of collective consciousness of the population, which remains largely rural, is not so much the “*citoyen*”, i.e. the bearer of civic rights, although this model has taken on political and social life among the population of the major urban areas, but rather the group, the extended family, clan, and region.

These networks are the foundation of political power and its justification. While these networks taken together do amount to a plurality, it is not the unrestricted plurality of Western democracy. In political life, this hampers the establishment of independent civil and political institutions, and imposes restrictions on the autonomy of the individual. Currently, the growing poverty of the mass of the population is driving them back to the groups and extended families that function as substitutes for the social security systems they no longer have.

The Maintenance of Peaceful Conditions for the Functioning of Society

In December 2006, at a conference held by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Bulat Sultanov, the director of the Kazakh Institute of Strategic Studies, assessed that the “general political situation in Central Asia remains tense”, “negative trends are growing stronger”, and the internal situation in a number of states is “unpredictable”.²⁴ He justified his views in reference to many of the phenomena mentioned above.

The strategy described at the start of pursuing radical transformation of all social, economic, and political systems *simultaneously* carries a high risk of destabilization. It creates dissatisfaction in a society that still remembers the high level of social security provided under the Soviet model, politicizes it, and places it, for a specific historical phase, in a state of tension. This raises the conflict-readiness of the society as a whole. The Tajik civil war, in particular, showed that system transformation could also politicize and mobilize the entire society in a negative direction. This general effect can itself trigger a violent chain reaction that can lead to the society fracturing and losing what could be considered its “natural” potential for civil conflict management. In Tajikistan, the process ended in the wholesale collapse of the society into anarchy and the temporary failure of the organs of state. Similar aspects of anarchy were also evident in Kyrgyzstan’s “Tulip Revolution”.

24 Bulat Sultanov, *The Current Political Situation in Central Asia*, paper given at a conference held by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation on “The Future of Regional Co-operation: Central Asia 2020, 11-13 December 2006.

Consequences

Several consequences can be drawn from this:

1. The key goal of the Western transformation strategy – the uprooting of the political and economic foundations of the Soviet type of society – has been achieved. There is no way back to the old Soviet imperium. That is a great victory, maybe even a historic one.

The Rubicon has also been crossed in the transformation to a market economy. Even if Western companies are not yet satisfied in every area – there seems to be no way back to a centralized, state-controlled economic system.

2. The transformation strategy has failed in the urgently necessary task of creating and consolidating the economic foundation for further state formation. The record with regard to the living standards of the overwhelming majority of the population is also clearly negative. Here the transformation is not only revealed to be entirely regressive, it is also hampering the transition to democracy by failing to establish the economic foundations for a social market economy and democracy. Criticism of the transformation process in this area therefore has to be particularly strong, given that these foundations were already established once during the period of Soviet rule. While the Soviet leadership did not make use of them for the development of democracy, the West has tolerated their final collapse. Here the West must face the question of how much distance from modernity it can accept without risking a civilizational regression for which it would itself be party responsible.

A great divide between rich and poor is being created, such as we know from the majority of developing countries, with all the social and political risks that this brings, including Islamist radicalization.

3. The West has so far failed to achieve its goal of establishing political systems in its own image. Sober reflection is needed on the question of whether and over what timescale this can be remedied. In all likelihood, liberal democracy will not be able to take root in the Central Asian societies in the foreseeable future. There is considerable evidence that it may prove impossible to ever achieve this goal to the satisfaction of the West.

What are the circumstances that support this hypothesis?

Growing Self-Sufficiency

To resist the West's democratization offensive, the Central Asian states have performed a fairly successful "entrenchment". They were helped in this by the West's own miscalculations. In its haste to promote the "revolutionary in-

stallation of an entrepreneurial class” (Offe), it entirely failed to identify the *type* of entrepreneurial class that would arise against the background of the specific character of Central Asian society.

The winners of a strategy of forcing “revolutionary” privatization “from above” were the large clans, above all those of the “first transformation generation”, because they were the only ones with the administrative and financial resources to make privatization work in their interest following the break-up of the Soviet Union. Never before had the clan system, a closed social group that opposes the opening of society, received such an economic boost as during privatization “from above”. Even in the Soviet period, the fusion of political, economic, and military power in the hands of one individual was not as tight and all-encompassing as currently in the clans of this “first generation”.

The paradox consists in the fact that the West’s strategy of transformation failed both to separate political and economic power, and to create the social basis for the “open society” that it would like to see. In fact, these policies have to some extent led to the opposite result: the emergence of a type of capitalism that can be characterized as “family-clan-bureaucratic capitalism”. The new entrepreneurial class installed in “revolutionary” circumstances is essentially undemocratic. And so is the political system that this class has installed.

The dilemma for the Western democratization strategy is that it would have to abolish this type of capitalism in order to achieve the type of democracy that it would like to see. That, however, is something that the West would not dare to do, and it thereby places the basis for a successful realization of its democratization strategy in doubt. Furthermore, this class of clan oligarchs of the “first generation”, which holds political, economic, and military power, will, sooner or later, have to make way to competition from new entrepreneurial classes of a second and a third generation. The latter will seek to acquire political power, but will not relinquish their economic strength. These struggles will drive future domestic political battles and will determine their shape and direction. However, they will not “abolish” the predominant type of capitalism nor the aversion of its representatives towards the separation of political and economic power, the open society, and Western-style democracy.

The second “line of entrenchment” that the Central Asian leaderships are currently excavating in their effort to retain power is collective security, union, and co-operation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, an international organization with unparalleled human and economic potential. This alliance is quickly gaining substance, as is readily apparent in connection with the oil and gas sector – an area of enormous strategic consequence.

Nineteen of the 127 projects for economic co-operation in the SCO framework are devoted to the energy and transportation sectors, and particu-

larly to co-operation between Russia, China, Kazakhstan, India, Iran, and the other Central Asian states.

Kazakhstan-China: In 2006, the Atasu-Alashankou oil pipeline went online. It supplies China's largest refinery. As of 2011, an additional 20 million tonnes of oil is to be extracted, amounting to 20 per cent of Chinese oil imports. Plans also exist to connect this pipeline with the West Siberian pipeline system at Omsk. The following are also planned:

- An additional pipeline system stretching from the Kazakh port of Atasu to China (3000 km). Cost: three billion US dollars. Annual capacity: 50 million tonnes.
- In 2006, Kazakhstan joined the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline.
- Via a joint venture with the Russian company Gazprom, the Kazakh company KazRosGaz is to supply 6.5 billion cubic metres of natural gas to Omsk and Europe.
- Gas will be delivered to Ukraine and the Russian Federation via the Central Asia-Centre (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan) pipeline.
- The Russian oil company Rosneft is to explore for oil on the Kazakh shelf in the Caspian Sea.

Russian Federation-Uzbekistan: In October 2005, Russia's Gazprom and Uzbekistan's Uztransgaz concluded a contract dealing with gas transportation between 2006 and 2010. It allows Gazprom to use 90 per cent of Uzbekistan's pipeline capacity, which is also the means by which Turkmenistan exports its gas.

Russian Federation-China: In July 2005, the Russian company Rosneft and the Chinese Sinopec signed an agreement to enter into a joint venture to explore for oil as part of the Sakhalin-3 project. The Indian company ONGC also has a 20 per cent holding in this.²⁵

"Lessons"

With regard to the key notions of European self-determination, the Euro-Asiatic continental space, strategic partnerships, and co-operation as the keyword of our century – what "lessons" can be drawn after 15 years of transformation?

1. The type of capitalism that has arisen in Central Asia, the "family-clan-bureaucratic capitalism" described above, and the entry of the Central Asian states to the SCO have changed the political balance of power between Europe and Central Asia to the latter's benefit and continue to do

²⁵ All figures are taken from *Central Asia, Report on Transformation*, Instytut Wschodni, Warsaw 2005.

- so. The leaderships of Central Asia are no longer dependent on Europe for their political and economic survival. They have a choice.
2. Central Asia occupies a favourable central position in the Euro-Asiatic continental space. Both the region's growing power in relation to Europe and the understanding that is finally growing in Europe of Central Asia's special role create a new but quite central challenge for European politics: If the Central Asian states are no longer forced to climb into the European "boat" by circumstances, but are still interested in tying their boat up alongside ours, as the meeting of foreign ministers on the EU-Central Asia strategy in Astana in March 2007 made clear, then the time has arrived for Europe to examine how it can learn to deal *democratically* with successful autocratic regimes as equals. Thankfully, the OSCE exists for this purpose.
 3. Measured *against* the West's original strategic goals (and not popular expectations), the achievements of the transformation accomplished under the leadership of the ruling Central Asian elites and Western pressure are not at all bad. In this respect, we can certainly speak of successful leadership, especially if we bear in mind that these are extraordinarily complex processes, and that, in Central Asia, transformation, state formation, and the creation of national identities have to be managed simultaneously. In fact, the West could be satisfied with these results. It could also accept that the ruling elites do not want the West to interfere in their structures of power.

In considering the area as a whole, the results of China's transformation should also be taken into consideration. China has decisively chosen to develop along a capitalist path. In objective terms, it is immaterial that this process is being led by a communist party, but subjectively it is of considerable import. That is because it demonstrates that even a communist party as powerful as the Chinese one sees no realistic alternative to the market economy as a means of enabling the desired rate of economic development. This view can be said to be shared by the leaderships of all the countries in the Asian part of the OSCE. It is of the greatest importance for the West's future strategy – more significant than the fact that the introduction of the capitalist economic order is not being steered by a political model of the kind the West would like to see, but rather by a Chinese one, a Central Asian one, a Russian one, and so on.

Thus, in the last 15 years, in the Central Asian part of the OSCE, geo-strategic constellations have shifted, the social-systemic landscape has changed, elites have rearranged themselves, their character, their interests, and the preconditions for their co-operation. The days of high optimism are coming to an end, and the West can no longer believe that it will be able to implement its "democracy as the only system of gov-

ernment”²⁶ in the massive post-Soviet space, with its high degree of plurality in terms of social nature and political culture. Attention must also be paid to ensuring that new contradictions do not undermine the still existing conditions that enable strategic partnerships and co-operation. These contradictions have already caught up with the OSCE. The most significant is that between the West’s desire to shape worldwide democratization processes and the actually existing structures of governance. If one were to follow the premises detailed above, it would be necessary to examine the practical political consequences that would arise from correctly recognizing that “external promotion of democratization cannot be imposed, exported, or executed. It can only play the role of a catalyst, optimizing tendencies towards liberalization and democratization that are already present in the target country. But not in Marx’s sense that ‘an idea becomes a material force when it grips the masses’.”²⁷

Can the Contradiction be Overcome?

Doing so will be difficult, but it is worth a try. Hence the following considerations:

1. With regard to essential changes in the international and regional environment and new tasks arising as a result, the discussion of the OSCE’s responsibilities needs to pay more attention to the Organization’s *future* character. A choice needs to be made between the vision of the OSCE as a “regulator” of co-operation and security in the spirit of Euro-Asiatic continental partnership, on the one hand, and an insistence on defending the Organization’s conception of itself as a motor of “proliferation” of the liberal-democratic model in the post-Soviet area, which has grown following the victory over the Eastern Bloc, on the other. With the former, the OSCE would first of all be providing Europe with a strategically indispensable service: adjusting its principles and steering instruments for a partnership with a view to co-operation and security, enabling the reconciliation and harmonization of interests. Furthermore, a renegotiated relationship of this kind would make it easier for key Euro-Asiatic countries, including Russia and the states of Central Asia, to make their choice of strategic partnerships, over which they are still indecisive, in favour of a secure future with Europe within a shared continent. This could also help to dispel fear of competition, which is a

26 Charter of Paris for a New Europe, Paris, 21 November 1990, in Arie Bloed (ed.), *The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Analysis and Basic Documents, 1972-1993*, Dordrecht 1993, pp. 537-566, here: p. 537.

27 Wulf Lapins, *Demokratieförderung in der Deutschen Außenpolitik* [The Promotion of Democracy in German Foreign Policy], Berlin, March 2007, p. 16.

source of mistrust, and which is felt in particular by the Russian Federation with regard to its Asian and Central Asian neighbours. Without some sort of reconciliation of interests between Europe and the Euro-Asiatic OSCE states, the latter might at some point agree to sign a “non-proliferation treaty” of quite another kind, one that China would perhaps not look upon with disfavour.

If current deliberations result in a decision that favours co-operation and security in the spirit of Euro-Asiatic continental partnership, it would be no “step backwards” for Europe, but rather a step forwards, as the reconciliation and harmonization of interests could mobilize potential opportunities for Euro-Asiatic co-operation that have not yet been fully recognized: in terms of economics, foreign policy, mutual cultural enrichment, and global policy.

The deliberations over a new relationship must of necessity be a joint task. Geographically, there would be no need for an extension of the OSCE area as it currently stands. The initial concern would be to build confidence between the European and Euro-Asiatic OSCE participating States. A subsequent step would be for the latter to seek to build confidence with their Asian partners.

2. The EU is of central importance for this vision. Following its enlargement to 27 members, it is now more European than the OSCE and may be considered the *de facto* authentic European community of values.

The CSCE, the OSCE’s forerunner, never considered itself as a “community of values” but rather as a means to an end: the creation of a regime of co-operation and coexistence, peaceful East-West relations, and the principles, instruments, and mechanisms necessary to bring it about. The CSCE was a community with a particular purpose. If either of the two sides had claimed to embody the genuine European community of values, then neither would the CSCE have become a “success story”, nor would the OSCE exist today. In the same way, the OSCE cannot realistically be seen as the incarnation of the European value community, but is rather a conglomerate of Euro-Asiatic states and values. Some of its participating States are even dominated by more or less traditional and patriarchal Islamic societies – Islamic in terms of religion, culture, and values. There are profound differences in terms of socio-political orientation and values, which ultimately form the background to central matters of dispute, such as those concerning “democracy as the only system of government” and the contradictions arising from it.

“Anyone who invokes a community of values without differentiating needs to be aware that this can turn into an act of submission, when one’s own values are no longer clearly represented.”²⁸ The West “no longer clearly” represents democracy in key aspects of its inter-

28 Egon Bahr, cited above (Note 5), p. 87.

national conduct. Since the West's leading power, and the player of a central role in the OSCE, has openly supported "regime change", it has been evident that democrats are by no means guarantors of peaceful relations between states. Against this background, a number of Euro-Asiatic OSCE participating States are more than unsettled.

Promoting democracy in a way that contains hidden demands for submission cannot even function as the lowest common denominator in relations between the European and the Euro-Asiatic OSCE participating States. Given the premises underlying these considerations, however, what is needed is rather the highest common factor: for the OSCE, its principles, its functioning as a whole, and its priorities for action. There needs to be legally anchored partnership and co-operation, reliability and predictability in relations, and guarantees for the upholding of stability and mutual security. There is a need to accept a plurality of domestic governance models, value systems, cultures, and religions, their coexistence in the OSCE, and the setting of priorities for all parties.²⁹

It should be possible for the OSCE to achieve this under the current conditions by acting as a "regulator" of co-operation and security in the spirit of Euro-Asiatic continental partnership. It should also be possible to achieve the necessary division of responsibilities between the EU and the OSCE. The precedent of finding a shared basis that can unite two difficult partners already exists: the CSCE's Helsinki Principles. The example they set should be taken up again and adapted to new challenges.

29 The international "Alliance of Civilizations" commission convened by Kofi Annan in 2005 demonstrated what the real priorities are here. Cf. Alliance of Civilizations, *Final Report*, 6 October 2006, at: <http://www.unaoc.org/repository/report.htm>.