

OSCE Co-operation with China: Relevance, Benefits, and Downsides

A Brief History of the OSCE's Contacts with China

Contacts between the OSCE and China go back to late 2003. They were initiated by China, when the Chinese ambassador in Vienna asked for a meeting with then Secretary General Jan Kubiš. While the formal motive for the meeting was to invite Ambassador Kubiš to the opening of the Secretariat of the Shanghai Co-operation Organization (SCO) in Beijing in January 2004, the Chinese gave no specific explanation of their further intentions *vis-à-vis* the OSCE. Formally, contacts then were entirely between the OSCE and the SCO. At the same time, there was a first exchange of opinions on genuine OSCE-Chinese issues between the sides in Vienna. This was followed by an invitation to the OSCE Secretary General to attend the opening of the Tashkent-based SCO Regional Antiterrorist Structure (RATS). According to a comment made later by an OSCE official, the years 2003 and 2004 were obviously just a period of inquiry for the Chinese side.

Following China's initial request for contacts in 2003, the delegations in Vienna informally discussed the possibility of inviting China to become an OSCE Asian Partner for Co-operation in 2005. Subsequently, the Slovenian Chairman-in-Office made the following three summarizing points at the Ljubljana Ministerial Council:

- We have a strong self-interest in effective partnership, and we should realize the mutual benefits of, for example, opening a dialogue with China.¹
- China expressed considerable interest in the OSCE in 2005.²
- Some participating States were supportive of entering into a formal OSCE-China partnership but in 2005 conditions were not yet ripe.³

In the following years, Chinese representatives attended the OSCE conferences in Korea (2005), Thailand (2006), and Mongolia (2007) "on an ARF ticket", and seminars with Mediterranean Partners "on an SCO ticket". As

1 Dimitrij Rupel, *OSCE CiO Opening Statement*, OSCE Ministerial Council, Ljubljana, MC.DEL/4/05, 5 December 2005.

2 *Activity Report of the Chairman-in-Office for 2005*, in: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Thirteenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council, 5 and 6 December 2005, Ljubljana 2005, MC13EW66, 6 December 2005, pp. 83-102, here: p. 99 (section on Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation).

3 Ibid.

OSCE officials explain, Chinese representatives usually had the rank of Foreign Ministry Deputy Division Director, Foreign Ministry Deputy Department Director, or deputy president of an academic institute. In July 2006, the Chinese embassy in Vienna expressed interest in co-operating with the OSCE. In October 2006, the new Secretary General, Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, had a brief (non-protocol) stopover in Beijing, where, among other things, he met a Chinese deputy foreign minister. In December 2006, the special envoy of the Belgian Chairman-in-Office, Senator Pierre Chevalier, went to Beijing. Since then, the office of the OSCE Secretary General has been in sporadic contact with the Chinese embassy in Vienna.

OSCE officials visited Beijing three times, but never received an official invitation. Conversely, no official Chinese visits to the OSCE were conducted. This may answer the question of why the issue of an OSCE-Chinese partnership was never, as is the OSCE's tradition, "actively informally" discussed with participating States. Equally, China has taken no active steps to initiate further contacts since 2005 but has merely responded to invitations as a rule. It is still unclear whether the 2003-2005 period, during which China showed a certain interest in the OSCE or at least in information on the OSCE, was merely a passing phase or an indicator of a possible future trend.

The Relevance of OSCE-Chinese Co-operation

If one takes into account the regional-structural context as well as the interests of the main actors concerned, the potential relevance of co-operation between the OSCE and China represents a mixed bag. While structural arguments may point in favour of co-operation, the interests of states involved do not, or not yet, or to a far lesser degree.

The (Regional-)Structural Context of OSCE-Chinese Co-operation

China shares borders with four OSCE participating States: Russia and the three Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The "Central Asian region forms the linchpin"⁴ between the OSCE participating States and the OSCE's Asian Partners for Co-operation, as the Belgian Chairman of the Contact Group with the Asian Partners for Co-operation, Ambassador Bertrand de Crombrughe, stated in his concluding remarks at the 2007 OSCE-Mongolia conference. The same is true of the region's position between the OSCE area and China. Economic relations between China and its neighbours are booming, with China being particularly interested in Russian and Central Asian energy resources. China, Russia, and all the Cen-

4 *Chairman's recommendations and suggestions*, OSCE-Mongolia Conference on "Strengthening the Co-operative Security between the OSCE and the Asian Partners for Co-operation", 12-13 June 2007, Ulaanbaatar, PC.DEL/589/07, 18 June 2007.

tral Asian states apart from Turkmenistan co-operate within the scope of the SCO, especially on anti-terrorism. Through the SCO and bilateral contacts, China has expanded its capacities as a security actor in the region. From this perspective, it would be desirable for the OSCE to co-operate with China, which is the only non-OSCE state within the SCO. All the more so as non-co-operation entails the risk that the OSCE, and implicitly also the EU, may become isolated from security co-operation in Central Asia.

Reserved Chinese Interest in European Multilateral Organizations

Although China and the EU are major trading partners, the EU is not seen by China as having significant political influence on Asian affairs, and Chinese affairs in particular. According to one expert, the EU generally has “no discernable impact on the strategic and institutional balance of the Asia Pacific”, and is therefore for China “not a strategic partner as such”.⁵ In the Chinese view, relations with the EU are second best to direct bilateral relations. In light of this, the idea that China would develop its relations with Europe through the OSCE seems even less plausible. Just as China does not need the EU to deal with European countries, it does not need the OSCE to mediate in its relations with Russia and the US. This is exacerbated by the OSCE’s recent overall decline in significance, which has seen it downgraded to an organization for “second-order security issues.”⁶

The OSCE barely figures in China’s thinking about security matters, and there is little awareness of OSCE affairs among the ruling elites. Few academic institutions in China have shown any interest in the Organization, and there are perhaps only half a dozen Chinese academic experts who have specialized in OSCE affairs. To the broader academic public, the OSCE has no significance at all.⁷ Notably, the attention of the Chinese political strata increased somewhat after the coloured revolutions in Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan, as concerns emerged about the causes of these events and their possible impact on China and Central Asia.⁸

Ambiguous Relevance for the Central Asian States

From a Central Asian perspective, there may be good reasons to encourage OSCE-Chinese relations. The five states find themselves balanced between

5 François Godement, Neither hegemon nor soft power: China’s rise at the gates of the West, in: Marcin Zaborowski (ed.), *Facing China’s rise: Guidelines for an EU strategy*, Chaillot Paper no. 94, December 2006, pp. 51-70, here: p. 56.

6 Francis Fukuyama, Re-envisioning Asia, in: *Foreign Affairs* 1/2005, pp. 75-87, here: p. 83.

7 Cf. Hans-Joachim Giessmann, Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH, interview in Hamburg, 22 November 2007.

8 Cf. Feng Shao Lei, School of Advanced International and Area Studies, East China Normal University, interview at the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH, 22 November 2007.

their two large neighbours, China and Russia, and might consider that involving the OSCE – and therefore implicitly also the EU – will enlarge their room for manoeuvre. In some cases, they may like the idea of engaging with China in multilateral formats, as has already happened with Russia over a longer period. On the other hand, the democracy-oriented OSCE may not be the most welcome vehicle in this regard, and has at any rate to compete with the SCO as an alternative framework.

Relevance for the OSCE's (Northeast) Asian Partners for Co-operation

Among the Asian Partners for Co-operation, Japan and South Korea have sporadically argued in favour of inviting China to become an Asian Partner for Co-operation. In their arguments, they noted China's security relevance for the OSCE area in general, and for Russia and Central Asia in particular, as well as the need to launch regional dialogue formats in Northeast Asia. Suggestions that the OSCE transfers know-how to the region were again made in 2007.⁹ Mongolia, with a lower profile than Japan or Korea, has developed its own "third-neighbour approach" in foreign relations, which places emphasis on the EU, Japan, and the US. It may also believe that it has something to gain from attracting China to forge closer links with the OSCE.

Summary

Consequently, the relevance of establishing ties of co-operation to China results more from the interest of the OSCE – and implicitly the EU – in not becoming isolated in Central Asia *vis-à-vis* the three dominant actors, namely Russia, China, and the USA, which mainly rely on their bilateral relations. The fact that these major players, and especially China itself, seem not to be particularly interested in OSCE-Chinese co-operation limits the prospects of any such co-operation from the very beginning.

Arguments for and against OSCE-Chinese Co-operation

In the following, we analyse a number of areas with a view to whether their development is conducive to OSCE-Chinese co-operation. These are the economic development of China, its general foreign policy strategy, policies on Central Asia including the SCO, the interests of the Asian Partners for Co-operation, the impact of human dimension and democratization issues, and status questions within the OSCE.

9 "Dialogue should also continue on assessing the relevance of the OSCE experience to North East Asia", *Chairman's recommendations and suggestions*, cited above (Note 4), p. 1.

China's activities on the international stage in Northeast Asia, with regard to Europe, and on a global scale are largely framed by economic interests. In this regard, its new foreign-relations formula is to follow "a win-win strategy of opening up [...] and pushing] for the building of a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity".¹⁰ For China, the economic dimension is the point of departure and the key motivation of all its foreign policy activities; all other motivations appear secondary. In economic terms, China has become involved with the OSCE area to a degree that has significant implications for all other fields of interests.¹¹

According to an observer, "China is today more open to the outside world than at any time since 1949, and not just economically".¹² Its economic rise is opening doors in other fields. For instance, China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) means that international commitments have to be translated into domestic regulations and structures. Some observers see the intrusion of the WTO regime into China's domestic affairs as already irreversible.¹³ As by-products of economic and technological exchange, multiple links have been forged in fields such as education, science, the media, and migration policy. There is extensive communication between Chinese society and foreign business communities and academia, and with the Chinese diaspora. Chinese tourists are discovering the world in large numbers. Chinese elites are discussing other countries' experiences with restructuring political institutions, reforming welfare systems, and handling policy dilemmas.¹⁴ Despite governmental oversight, new information technologies are linking people directly to the outside world. Perhaps the most visible indication of China's new relative openness is its hosting of the 2008 Summer Olympic Games.

Economic change, co-operation, and communication are gradually permeating China's once closed economy, and this is producing spillover effects on other social and political fields. It is therefore important that attempts to bring about "change through trade" (in German "*Wandel durch Handel*")¹⁵ are complemented by efforts aiming at rapprochement and change through multilateral co-operation. From the European perspective, it would be advis-

10 *Constitution of Communist Party of China*, section on the General Programme, Xinhua News Agency, 26 October 2007, at: <http://www.china.org.cn/english/congress/229722.htm>.

11 A frequently cited example of China's international economic power is its potential to threaten the international monetary system by selling its huge reserves of US dollars.

12 Peter Ferdinand, The challenge of democratisation, in: Zaborowski (ed.), cited above (Note 5), pp. 27-38, here: p. 31.

13 See also: Hanns Günther Hilpert et al., *China 2020*, SWP-Studie S 32, October 2005 (in German), p. 6, pp. 15ff.

14 Cf. Ferdinand, The challenge of democratisation, cited above (Note 12), p. 31.

15 Cf. Kay Möller, *Nordostasien 2002* [Northeast Asia 2002], SWP-Studie S 36, October 2002, p. 6.

able to involve China in as many fields of exchange and conversation as possible.

The Impact of China's General Foreign Policy Strategy

As emphasized at the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in October 2007, China's foreign policy is based on the five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; mutual non-aggression; non-interference in internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence. China also strives for good-neighbourly relations and co-operation with developing countries.¹⁶ These principles are emphasized in conversation with Chinese officials on OSCE co-operation.¹⁷ At the same time, they are the soft vehicles for carrying China's hard economic interests across other countries' doorsteps.

At the global level, China shows little ambition to step into a super-power role. Pragmatically, it avoids assuming responsibility. In this regard, the examples of Russia (and the Soviet Union) and the US have a deterring effect on China. In multilateral organizations such as the UN, China tries to remain neutral or passive. In general, it prefers to arrange its foreign relations bilaterally rather than on a multilateral basis. There have been only two notable exceptions: China's co-initiation of the Shanghai Co-operation Organization and its accession to the WTO.

Irrespective of its economic progress, China's global military and political capacities are still limited. The longstanding presence of the United States in the Asia-Pacific region is a matter of fact, as is the considerable weight of other players. Within the Chinese leadership, there appear to be no illusions about this. At the same time, Beijing has been sensitive to concerns among its neighbours at its successful development. The normalization of relations with neighbouring countries and the co-initiation of or entry into multilateral frameworks demonstrate Beijing's new relative openness. It is striving to forge constructive relations with major players such as the US, Russia, India, the EU, and major EU members, while holding back from entering alliances.¹⁸ An increasingly important issue is China's proactive entrance into the field of development co-operation in Africa.

While the traditional Chinese foreign-policy principles of non-interference, non-assumption of responsibility, and focusing on bilateral relations remain valid, we can observe a certain softening of them. In the long term, this enhances the opportunities for including China in multilateral networks and organizations in areas that it deems critical.

16 Cf. *Constitution of Communist Party of China*, cited above (Note 10).

17 Cf. Chunqing Wang, Embassy of the People's Republic of China, interview in Vienna, 3 December 2007.

18 See also: Gudrun Wacker, China's "Grand Strategy", in: Gudrun Wacker (ed.), *Chinas Aufstieg. Rückkehr der Geopolitik?* [China's Rise. The Return of Geopolitics?], SWP-Studie S 3, February 2006, pp. 64f.

Central Asia and the OSCE, SCO, and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA)

Since the mid-1990s, China has taken decisive steps to establish stable relations with Russia and its Central Asian neighbours. Key moments were the settlement of border issues, and the 2001 founding of the SCO. On the one hand, this has created favourable conditions for China's further economic expansion into this part of the OSCE area. On the other, it has established a new multilateral security structure in Central Asia that includes China.

During the 1990s, the OSCE was mainly concerned with South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, and it is only since 11 September 2001 that it has focused more on Central Asia. Today, according to one observer, "the focus of the OSCE is shifting more and more to the East – to the South Caucasus, Central Asia with Kazakhstan, and Afghanistan."¹⁹ This has led to the present situation, where the spheres of activity of the OSCE and China are increasingly overlapping in Central Asia. This gives rise to the question of how this overlap should be organized: in a co-operative, a competitive, or an isolationist manner? Because Central Asia is the most important point of intersection between the OSCE and China, OSCE-Chinese co-operation does not necessarily need to be organized in a direct manner by making China an Asian Partner for Co-operation, but can also be framed by indirect means using the SCO or CICA as a platform (cf. the section on platforms for indirect co-operation between the OSCE and China below).

The 2010 Kazakh OSCE Chairmanship may promote co-operation of this kind, as Kazakhstan currently also holds the post of SCO Secretary General. Not only may the Chinese perceive that "this combination will open more space to China",²⁰ there might also be opportunities to use the Kazakh-initiated Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) as another platform for interaction with China, which is a CICA participant.

Interests of the OSCE's (Northeast) Asian Partners for Co-operation

The Northeast Asian sub-region has its own identifiable role in international affairs. It goes without saying that no major security matter can be settled here without China; the same is true of Russia and the USA. The region clearly has no tradition of multilateralism. While regional crisis management and confidence-building mainly rest on bilateral relations, modern security affairs can no longer be handled outside multilateral arrangements, as is shown by the six-party talks on the Korean question.

19 Hideyuki Sakamoto, Chargé d'affaires, Embassy of Japan, interview in Vienna, 4 December 2007.

20 Interview with Feng Shao Lei, cited above (Note 8).

It is generally understood “that the establishment of a regional security co-operation framework in Northeast Asia is inextricably linked to the development of the relations among China, Japan, Russia and the USA, the four major players in the area.”²¹ On this basis, not only Japan and South Korea, but also Russia and the US, and, even to a certain degree China, have an interest in multilateralizing bilateral dialogues. In 2005, the US and South Korea jointly declared that they would “make common efforts to develop a regional multilateral security dialogue and a co-operation mechanism, so as to jointly respond to regional security issues”.²² China, for its part, has repeatedly raised the idea of establishing a Northeast Asia Security Forum that could later replace the six-party talks.²³

Northeast Asia’s heterogeneity may cause some to turn to the OSCE model. As a platform with proven capabilities in building confidence through dialogue and negotiation, and mutual threat reduction through arms control, the Organization possesses experience that Northeast Asia can draw upon.²⁴ This may be particularly true of the early CSCE process, which served to provide continuity in international relations and to establish security standards. This and the specific CSCE experience in making pan-European package deals may be attractive precisely because of the “loose characteristics the CSCE had at its inception”.²⁵ Transferring OSCE multilateral conflict-management expertise to Northeast Asia may add to regional stability there. Even the Chinese acknowledge that “the OSCE could be a model for institution building in Northeast Asia”.²⁶

Japan and South Korea, both of which are already Asian Partners for Co-operation, have argued in favour of inviting China to also become one. From their point of view, the creation of multilateral formats in Northeast Asia is inevitable, as bilateral ties are not sufficient for regional security building. South Korea stresses its experience with the six-party talks. Japan’s bilateral record with China, in particular, is unsatisfactory. More specifically,

21 Statement of the Permanent Mission of Spain to the OSCE, in: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Office of the Secretary General, Section for External Co-operation, *2005 OSCE-Korea Conference on new security threats and a new security paradigm*, PC.DEL/343/05, 25-26 April 2005.

22 Presidents George W. Bush and Roh Moo-hyun, *Joint Declaration on the ROK-U.S. Alliance and Peace on the Korean Peninsula*, 17 November 2005, at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/11/20051117-6.html>.

23 Cf. Godement, cited above (Note 5), p. 64.

24 Cf. *Inventing a New Framework for Peace and Security in Northeast Asia*, Keynote Address by Su-Hoon Lee, Chairman of Presidential Committee on Northeast Asian Cooperation Initiative, Republic of Korea, p. 5, at: http://nabh.pa.go.kr/board/data/activity/362/leesh_050923.pdf.

25 “Europe benefited from the loose characteristics that CSCE had at its inception. This ‘looseness’ functioned very well as it allowed a number of nations with strategically different perceptions to come together and discuss diverse security issues. Considering the lack of ‘trust’ at the political and military levels and complexity of the security issues facing the region, at least in the initial stages, Northeast Asia may also be better off with such ‘looseness.’” *Ibid.*, p. 7.

26 Interview with Chunqing Wang, cited above (Note 17).

Japanese positions on an OSCE-Chinese partnership have ranged from strong oral support, assured earlier, to somewhat reluctant statements given more recently.²⁷ South Korean positions are more definite and range from general endorsement to emphasizing the need to link Korean reunification efforts to China's involvement in all possible multilateral formats.²⁸ Generally, South Korea "desires to alter the Northeast Asian security order from one of collective defence – based on Cold War perceptions – to one of co-operative security – based on comprehensive security".²⁹

Consequently, it is not so much the OSCE's current regional focus on Central Asia but rather its general features and historic experiences with multilateral processes that make it an attractive partner for the countries of Northeast Asia. Then again, transferring lessons learned by the OSCE to the Northeast Asian context is by no means bound to end in China becoming an OSCE Asian Partner for Co-operation.

The Impact of Human Rights and Democratization

It is frequently argued that the OSCE will not be welcomed by China because of its human dimension *acquis*, and particularly because of its position that "the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension of the OSCE are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned".³⁰ This stands in contrast to the finding that "China's newfound involvement with multilateralism is in practice synonymous with non-intervention in the affairs of sovereign states, including by multilateral organizations and internationally approved action. This applied in the past to human rights and regime change issues."³¹ China will obviously have fundamental difficulties with the OSCE, and especially with its human dimension. In this sense, the OSCE may not be well received in Northeast Asia, "because the OSCE today is viewed as more focused on democratization and human rights protection, the so-called humanitarian dimension of comprehensive and cooperative security".³²

While the CSCE/OSCE process was originally a means of maintaining the status quo between states, it has increasingly evolved into an instrument

27 Cf. Hideyuki Sakamoto, Chargé d'affaires, Embassy of Japan, interview in Vienna, 4 December 2007.

28 Ambassador Sung-Hwan Kim, Embassy of the Republic of Korea, Permanent Mission to the International Organizations in Vienna, interview in Vienna, 3 December 2007.

29 Su-Hoon Lee, cited above (Note 24).

30 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Document of the Moscow Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, Moscow, 3 October 1991, 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.

31 Godement, cited above (Note 5), p. 57.

32 Kiki Fukushima, *A Fate of Regionalism in East Asia and Northeast Asia, A View from Tokyo*, p. 26 at: <http://usccis.org/tools/software/original/public/fileforward.php?Id=3325&PHPSESSID=582dc278b53ce57306158e2d2a7e7b0b>.

that is used to influence internal developments in countries in transition. It is also widely believed that this contributes to stability at national levels and beyond. OSCE participating States have assured each other of mutual assistance “in case of overthrow or attempted overthrow of a legitimately elected government of a participating State by undemocratic means”.³³ It was certainly no accident that this assurance was given right after the failed *coup d'état* in Russia in 1991 – purportedly at Russia’s suggestion. Specifically in the context of the aforementioned opening of internal affairs to CSCE/OSCE interference, the states declared to support vigorously “the legitimate organs of [the affected ...] State upholding human rights, democracy and the rule of law, [herewith] recognizing their common commitment to countering any attempt to curb these basic values”.³⁴ The CSCE/OSCE represents a model of successfully managing change and avoiding sudden ruptures and instability. Even if the Chinese do not see the OSCE this way, its concept of “accompanying” peaceful evolution is nonetheless guaranteed to cause wariness on that side.

On the other hand, the Chinese leadership apparently sees a need to respond to Western comments on its domestic situation as well as to challenges arising from the situation itself. At the 17th CPC National Congress in October 2007, the Chinese President and General Secretary of the CPC, Hu Jintao, made numerous references to democratization issues. The congress also adopted amendments to the Constitution of the Communist Party of China stating that the CPC “respects and safeguards human rights. It encourages the free airing of views and works to establish sound systems and procedures of democratic election, decision-making, administration and oversight. It strengthens state legislation and law enforcement so as to bring all work of the state under the rule of law.”³⁵

Such statements can easily be dismissed as being purely declaratory. On the other hand, they do go substantially further than anything that happened in the Soviet Union, perhaps with the exception of the late Gorbachev period. In addition, declaratory policy is tending to develop a life of its own, and to serve as a basis of reference for actual change, just as happened with the Helsinki Final Act in the former Soviet bloc. Seen from this perspective, the OSCE’s human dimension *acquis* does not represent an obstacle, but an important asset for OSCE-Chinese relations in the long-term.

Both of these conflicting arguments are accurate in their way. In the short term, the OSCE’s relatively intrusive human rights and democracy commitments might cause Chinese reservations. However, over the longer term, the OSCE’s experience with democratic transformation processes might be more appreciated by China.

33 OSCE Moscow Document, cited above (Note 30), here: p. 612.

34 Ibid.

35 *Constitution of Communist Party of China*, cited above (Note 10).

Japan's Special Status as Restraining Factor

Last but not least, the OSCE's long-standing partnership with Japan, taken together with Japan's special position among the OSCE's Asian Partners for Co-operation, could somewhat complicate efforts to win China over to co-operation. It is uncertain whether China would be willing to accept the special treatment that has traditionally been given to Japan, and the exceptional position Japan occupies, which has even been enshrined in the new OSCE Rules of Procedure.³⁶

The existing tensions between China and Japan may contribute to keeping China at a distance from the idea of maintaining contact or even co-operating with the OSCE, all the more so as relations with Japan have only gradually improved over recent years, contrary to the general improvement in China's relations with its neighbours.

Platforms for Indirect Co-operation between the OSCE and China

Given China's hesitant approach and its difficulties with the OSCE's human-dimension *acquis*, it seems premature to directly address the possibility that China could become an OSCE Asian Partner for Co-operation. In addition, the OSCE itself is currently passing through a difficult period, with its human-dimension commitments being more or less openly challenged by a number of participating States. Adding China as an Asian Partner for Co-operation in such a situation might even aggravate things.

On the other hand, putting the very idea of co-operation with China on the back burner would be short-sighted and might mean missing longer-term strategic opportunities. If this view is taken, it would be conceivable to engage with China indirectly using the SCO, CICA, ARF, and ASEAN+3 formats and track II events as contact platforms.

36 “3. Japan may attend and make both oral and written contributions at meetings of the decision-making bodies, without the right to participate in the drafting of documents. 4. Other Partners for Co-operation may attend and make both oral and written contributions at the Meetings of Heads of State or Government and Ministerial Council meetings and, upon invitation by the respective Chairperson, at certain meetings of the PC and the FSC, without the right to participate in the drafting of documents. 7. Unless otherwise decided for certain ISBs by the relevant superior decision-making body, the Partners for Co-operation may attend the meetings of the following ISBs, without the right to participate in the drafting of documents: (a) Japan — PrepComm, EESC, Working Groups A and B, Contact Group with the Asian Partners for Co-operation; (b) Other Partners for Co-operation — their respective Contact Groups.” *Rules of Procedure of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*, MC.DOC/1/06, reprinted in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2007*, Baden-Baden 2008, pp. 355-376, here: IV. Rules of procedure for decision-making bodies, IV.1 General rules, (D) Other participants, p. 364, and V. Rules of procedure for informal bodies, (A) Informal subsidiary bodies of the decision-making bodies, p. 367.

The SCO as a Contact Platform

As China is the only member of the SCO that is not an OSCE participating State, any interaction of the OSCE with the SCO is an interaction with China. The types of co-operation available here include mutual invitations to conferences and joint seminars and the participation of the SCO in selected OSCE projects in Central Asia. This might be complicated in view of the fact that the SCO does not provide a normative basis comparable to that of the OSCE, particularly in the human dimension. Moreover, the SCO might prefer to concentrate more narrowly on fighting “the ‘three evils’ of ‘terrorism, separatism and extremism’”.³⁷ If so, assertions like the following: “If the OSCE would choose to strengthen its ties with the SCO, the human dimension is likely to be made a central issue”³⁸ could appear far from realistic. Nevertheless, initial steps could be taken to engage with the SCO. One path would be to discuss human dimension issues and their potential for targeting the “three evils”.

The CICA as a Contact Platform

The CICA goes back to an initiative of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev that was first presented at the UN General Assembly in 1992. Four Central Asian states – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan – are CICA members, as are Russia, the US, and China. Alongside other international organizations, the OSCE takes part in CICA events. The CICA has elaborated a Declaration on Principles Guiding Relations Between CICA Member States (1999) and a CICA Catalogue of Confidence Building Measures (2004). As a minor international forum, the CICA might be considered a good place to conduct a special OSCE dialogue with China.

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) as a Contact Platform

The ARF, established in 1994, is another significant format for OSCE-China contacts. Despite ASEAN’s primarily Southeast Asian focus, the ARF has its specifically Northeast Asian dimension. Arrangements such as the ARF are based upon the belief that regional security building in Asia will essentially be based upon sub-regional rapprochements, which in turn have to be prepared by bilateral dialogues. The ARF is a key point of contact for relevant

37 Alyson J.K. Bailes et al., *The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation*, SIPRI Policy Paper No. 17, May 2007, p. 6.; and *SCO Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism*, 2001, at: <http://www.sectSCO.org/html/00093.html>.

38 Marcel de Haas, *The Shanghai Cooperation and the OSCE: Two of a Kind?* In: *Helsinki Monitor: Security and Human Rights* 3/2007, p. 257.

ASEAN dialogue partners³⁹ and China. For the OSCE, it provides a platform for sharing experiences, specifically on CBMs, and for preventive diplomacy (both key points on the ARF agenda) particularly with China.

The ASEAN+3 Format as a Contact Platform

A further format for arranging Northeast Asian sub-regional dialogue is ASEAN+3, which has been established for talks between China, Japan, and South Korea. Notably, the 2007 Singapore ASEAN summit decided to spin-off the “Plus Three” dimension of ASEAN+3 and develop it gradually into an autonomous institutionalized format for trilateral dialogue. This includes plans to set up a small secretariat and to instigate rotating top-level meetings.

Track II Approaches as Contact Platforms

The above-mentioned platforms, and particularly the ARF and the ASEAN+3 formats, can be combined with track II approaches, whose task is to prepare future official contacts.

Recommendations

The philosophy of the following recommendations is not to make one big formal step – to invite China to become an Asian Partner for Co-operation – but to engage in a number of small steps in different formats to continuously provide China with information and to start practicing low-level co-operation, including track II diplomacy.

It is recommended that consideration be made of China’s possible desire to continue low-profile contacts with the OSCE. In China’s opinion, “one could start with exchanging staff, visit each other, participate in symposiums and discuss at working levels issues like anti-terror measures, non-proliferation and armament control. New threats and risks are of interest to China. We have hope for exchange at working level and somewhat above.”⁴⁰

It is recommended that China be invited to establish more regular contacts with the OSCE. The underlying intention should be to make China gradually acquainted with Europe’s multilateral security traditions as embodied in the OSCE. Relevant fields range from OSCE norms, principles, and commitments to OSCE structures, mechanisms, and procedures. Information should be provided to Chinese elites.

39 These include more than 30 OSCE participating States and Partners: Canada, the EU states, Russia and the US, on the one hand; Japan, Mongolia, and South Korea along with Thailand, a member of ASEAN, on the other.

40 Interview with Chunqing Wang, cited above (Note 17).

It is proposed that track II co-operation with China be gradually established, first of all by inviting Chinese experts to OSCE track II events, later by arranging joint OSCE-China track II events. The ARF track II approaches have so far been positive.

It is recommended that small-scale academic co-operation projects be supported. An example would be the promotion of networks between Chinese, German, and Central Asian think tanks.⁴¹ “First we need some academic projects before coming to official co-operation”, is a fairly typical Chinese comment.⁴² It is recommended that consideration be made of using the OSCE Prague Office to gradually establish an OSCE Asian Partner for Co-operation track II exchange, in which Chinese experts can be included.

It would be advisable to apply some of the 2007 Ulaanbaatar proposals to China. They were made with reference to interested Asian Partners for Co-operation and proposed, among other things, “to send experts to participate in OSCE regional workshops/seminars/training programs in all three dimensions” and “to second experts to the OSCE executive structures.”⁴³

It is recommended that an “OSCE meets North East Asia” seminar be arranged to be attended by Asian Partners for Co-operation, interested participating States, OSCE structures, and China. In the sense of the 2007 Ulaanbaatar proposals, the seminar should be used to discuss the “relevance of the OSCE experience to North East Asia, especially in the area of confidence-building measures (CBMs)”.⁴⁴

It is recommended that existing joint events with the ARF be used or new events arranged to exchange experiences on CBMs and preventive diplomacy. The ARF wants to engage with “significant organizations or processes that are deemed of immediate relevance to the ARF and its particular CBM-PD activities.”⁴⁵ This may be utilized for contacts with China.

It is recommended that consideration be made of inviting North Korea to communicate with the OSCE. This is independent of an invitation to China, but might be linked with it in the sense of helping to create an encouraging atmosphere. There are similar South Korean efforts to involve North Korea more deeply in ARF affairs.⁴⁶

It is recommended that advance thought be given to using the 2010 Kazakh OSCE Chairmanship to make contacts with China. In this context, the current Kazakh SCO Secretary-General could play a valuable intermedi-

41 Cf. interview with Feng Shao Lei, cited above (Note 8).

42 Ibid.

43 Chairman’s recommendations and suggestions, cited above (Note 4), p. 1.

44 Ibid.

45 ASEAN Regional Forum, *A Concept Paper on Enhancing Ties between Track I and Track II in the ARF, and between the ARF and Other Regional and International Security Organizations*; 13th ARF, Kuala Lumpur 2006; PC.DEL/278/07/Rev.1.

46 Cf. Permanent Mission of Belgium to the OSCE, *Report of the Contact Group meeting with the Asian Partners for Co-operation*, Vienna, 22 June 2007, PC.DEL/646/07, 27 June 2007.

ary role. Likewise, the Kazakh-initiated CICA could be another framework for meeting CICA participant China.

It is recommended that SCO officials be invited to OSCE events in Central Asia, that OSCE officials visit SCO events, that participating States' diplomats visit SCO events "on an OSCE ticket", and that the two organizations hold joint seminars at expert level on issues of common concern.