

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the OSCE: Two of a kind?

*Marcel de Haas*¹

Introduction

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a regional international organisation comprising states in Europe, the Near East, Central Asia and South East Asia. The SCO regulates of cooperation in political, military, economic, energy and cultural fields. SCO member states have a population of nearly 1.5 billion people, which is about a quarter of the total world population. Including the four observers, the SCO even encompasses nearly half of the world's population. Furthermore, in addition to the member states Russia and China, the observers India and Pakistan bring together four nuclear powers, whereas the observer Iran might well be on the road to reaching that status. The total area occupied by SCO member states is 3/5 of the territory of Eurasia.² An important ingredient of economic cooperation is energy, in which Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Iran are big exporters — and China and India are significant importers. The size of the armed forces of China and Russia belong to the top three in the world.³ Russia and even more so China are the leading actors of the SCO. Comprising a considerable territory in and around Central Asia, a large part of the world's population, energy sources, nuclear arms and significant armed forces, the SCO in theory has a formidable economic, political and military potential.

Why would the SCO be of any interest to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)? For example, because of shared activities and objectives, such as arms control. But also because of the geographical area they largely have in common. Furthermore, and perhaps the most important reason, because both organisations are active players in international security and are thus likely to have a similar interest in advancing the international rule of law and stability. This article provides an insight into the development and current policies of the SCO. Next, it makes a comparison between the SCO and the OSCE and elaborates on the relationship between both organisations. The article

¹ Lieutenant-Colonel Dr M. de Haas has a PhD in Russian security studies and is a Senior Research Fellow in the military doctrine, strategy and security policy of the Netherlands, NATO, the EU, Russia and the CIS, at the Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael' in The Hague.

² Brief introduction to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, <http://www.sectSCO.org/html/00026.html>; The SCO members and observers account for some 2.7 billion people out of 6.4 billion of the world's population (Source: 2005 World Population Data Sheet, www.prb.org).

³ http://www.nationmaster.com/red/graph/mil_arm_for_per-military-armed-forces-personnel&b_printable=1.

concludes with the outcome of the comparison and the outlook for further cooperation between the SCO and OSCE.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: Development

In 1996 the 'Shanghai Five' group of cooperating states was founded with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and China as members, i.e. former Soviet republics facing China. The basic objective of this grouping was to diminish possible tensions at the borders, which was realised by signing an 'Agreement on deepening military trust in border regions' (1996) and an 'Agreement on reduction of military forces in border regions' (1997).⁴ Next, the members of the 'Shanghai Five' together with Uzbekistan decided to lift this grouping to a higher level, in order to make it a strong base and important support for developing cooperation among the six states under new conditions. On 15 June 2001 in Shanghai the Heads of these six states created a new organisation of regional cooperation, the SCO. Also during this meeting 'The Shanghai convention on the fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism' was signed. After diminishing military tensions, and by creating mutual trust, friendship and cooperation, this convention against the so-called 'three evils' marked the next phase in development of the SCO.

The year 2004 meant the completion of the formation phase of the SCO. Two permanent organs were established: a Secretariat in Beijing and a Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Furthermore, Mongolia joined as the first SCO observer.⁵ Until 2004 the SCO mainly dealt with regional security — in particular against the three 'evils' of terrorism, separatism and extremism — as well as with economic cooperation. Gradually, the SCO changed from a purely regional outlook into an organisation seeking international recognition and cooperation. In 2004 the SCO received an observer status at the UN.⁶ At the Summit of July 2005, in Astana, Kazakhstan, the SCO proclaimed a radical change of course. In previous years the governments of the Central Asian member states and Uzbekistan especially — felt increasingly threatened by the Western-backed regime changes in Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004), another change of government in Kyrgyzstan (2005) as well as with Western criticism of the Uzbek government putting down the unrest in Andijan in May 2005. This encouraged them to strengthen their ties with Russia and China. At the Astana Summit this led to a final declaration of the

⁴ History of development of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, <http://www.sectSCO.org/html/00035.html>.

⁵ Chronology of Main events within the framework of "Shanghai five" and Shanghai Cooperation organization (SCO), <http://www.sectSCO.org/html/00030.html>; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, 7 January 2004, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/topics/sco/t57970.htm>.

⁶ Speech by the Secretary-General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Zhang Deguang at the 60th High-Level plenary meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, September 16, 2005, <http://www.sectSCO.org/html/00515.html>.

SCO, which called for the withdrawal of (Western) military forces from Central Asia. Besides taking on an anti-Western course, at this summit — in addition to Mongolia — Iran, Pakistan and India joined the SCO as observers.⁷ Thus, in less than a decade the SCO has developed from an arms control grouping via a counter-terror institution into an international organisation.

Activities

Since 2001 the SCO has developed frequent consultations and cooperation, in particular at the levels of Heads of State, Heads of Government and Ministers of Defence, Foreign Affairs, Economic Affairs, Transport and Energy. Concrete cooperation is mainly found in the following areas.

Although the SCO started as a security entity — extending from confidence building measures at the borders to anti-terrorist activities — the organisation is still far from becoming a genuine international security organisation. Nevertheless, as of 2002 military exercises — initially mainly targeted at large-scale terrorist incursions — have been one of the prominent activities of the SCO. Since the start the SCO military exercises have become increasingly ambitious, developing from a bilateral or multilateral level to a joint all-SCO level. Furthermore, gradually, the emphasis of the exercises on counterterrorism has been expanded with international power play aspects. In August 2005 Russian and Chinese armed forces carried out joint exercises. The contents of these exercises had little to do with warfare against terrorism, but was actually nothing other than practising conventional warfare, probably to demonstrate to the (Western) world that Russia and China considered themselves to be in control of the Asian-Pacific region.⁸ In August 2007 Russian-Chinese military manoeuvres were again conducted at which the Heads of State appeared after their annual political summit in Bishkek. Thus, military exercises seem to receive a political connotation.

Related to military exercises is the counterterrorism policy of the SCO. Terrorism increasingly became a concern for individual SCO members. Because of its transnational nature it was decided that this problem should be solved at the SCO level rather than individually. This was realised by the establishment of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The RATS, operational since June 2004, analyses regional terrorist movements, exchanges information about terrorist threats and advises on counter-terrorist policies. Concrete activities of the RATS are coordinating SCO exercises of combined security forces and efforts to disrupt terrorist financing.⁹

⁷ Declaration of Heads of Member States of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Astana, 5 July 2005, <http://www.sectSCO.org/html/00500.html>.

⁸ M. de Haas, *Russian-Chinese military exercises and their wider perspective: Power play in Central Asia*, Russian Series 05/51, Swindon: Conflict Studies Research Centre, UK Defence Academy, October 2005.

⁹ R. Weitz, 'Shanghai summit fails to yield NATO-style defence agreement', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, August 2006, p. 40.

The fact that the SCO contains major energy exporters as well as significant energy importers makes energy also one of the topics of cooperation of this organisation. Until recently, energy issues were usually arranged on a bilateral and not on a common base, using the SCO as a platform to accommodate energy deals. At the Shanghai Summit of June 2006 Putin announced the intention to establish within the SCO an 'Energy Club', uniting energy-producing and consuming states, transit countries and private companies, with the purpose of coordinating energy strategies and strengthening energy security. On 3 July 2007 this 'Energy Club' was established in Moscow.¹⁰ Thus, as with the military manoeuvres, bilateral or multilateral energy cooperation among SCO members is developing into a common SCO energy policy.

The framework of the SCO also encompasses other economic, ecological, social and cultural activities. The major fields of cooperation are energy, information, telecommunications, environmental protection and the comprehensive utilization of natural resources. As a regional answer to the challenges of economic globalisation, the SCO envisages free trade. Economic cooperation is also considered from a security dimension: fighting poverty will also remove the grounds for the 'three evils'. In addition to these, trade and investment facilitation are also matters of concern, with emphasis on building infrastructure such as roads and railways and harmonizing customs and tariffs. Moreover, activities have been developed against drugs trafficking and organised crime. In 2005 mutual assistance was attained on the consequences of natural disasters and other emergencies. Allegedly, plans have also been made against pandemics.¹¹ The cultural cooperation is demonstrated by arts and folk dance festivals and exhibitions. As in other fields of cooperation, joint economic, environmental and social policies depend on the political will of the SCO members to replace bilateral cooperation by multilateral action at the SCO level.

Comparison and cooperation between SCO and OSCE: Similarities

In comparing the two organisations, first of all, the SCO and OSCE demonstrate parallels in geographic areas, membership, objectives and activities.¹² Both organisations partly share the same geographical areas (continents), i.e. (parts of) Europe and Central Asia, whereas the SCO further includes (parts of) the Near East and South East Asia and the OSCE also covers North America. As to

¹⁰ 'Energy outcome of SCO meeting in Dushanbe', RIA Novosti, 20 September 2006; Poyavitsya Energoklub ShOS', 3 July 2007, <http://www.scosummit2007.org/news/press/62/>; 'Polozheniye ob energeticheskom klube', 3 July 2007, http://www.scosummit2007.org/files/material/polozhenie_energ_kluba.doc.

¹¹ Weitz, 'Shanghai summit fails to yield NATO-style defence agreement', p. 41; G. Wacker, *The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation – Regional Security and Economic Advancement*, website of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 20 August 2004, http://www.kas.de/proj/home/pub/37/1/year-2004/dokument_id-5210/index_print.html.

¹² See table 1: Comparison between SCO and OSCE on page 257-258.

membership, five states — Russia and four Central Asian states — are members of both organisations. However, a comparison of the membership also demonstrates a large difference in numbers: the SCO has less than 10 members, whereas the OSCE has more than 50. With regard to nuclear powers, both organisations comprise four, of which they share one: Russia.

Furthermore, to a certain extent the OSCE and the SCO have a development process along similar lines. The origin of both organisations is found in the desire to avoid or decrease tensions in the military dimension. In the 1970s the OSCE was created to do so between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Similarly, some 20 years later, in the 1990s, the predecessor of the SCO, the so-called 'Shanghai Five', was formed to improve relations between China on the one side and the bordering former Soviet republics on the other side, by way of reducing border troops and developing further confidence and security building measures (CSBMs). Related to this, another similarity is found in their chronological development, in which both organisations have matured from an initial focus mostly on the military-political dimension — with the aim of reducing potential military threats — towards one of broad security including the economic, ecological and human dimensions of security.¹³ This development also shows that, first, the military dimension of security has to be addressed and dealt with, before more emphasis can be placed on the other fields of security. In addition to this, the OSCE and the SCO have from the start followed the principle of co-operative security, i.e. a collective approach among states.

When comparing their official statements, both organisations also share a general purpose. The basic principle of the OSCE is comprehensive security, which explains why security and stability do not only depend on the military-political dimension but also on economic, ecological and human aspects. According to the contents of its goals and tasks, principles and areas of cooperation, the SCO also considers comprehensive security as its foundation. Furthermore, there is mutual coherence among them, i.e. the various security dimensions are interdependent. The assumption that security is indivisible subsequently leads to the conclusion that the security of a state is also influenced by that of other states. Therefore, security can only be achieved or maintained in co-operation with other states. Consequently, all-compassing security consists of a comprehensive and a co-operative approach.¹⁴ This theoretical approach has been put into practice by the OSCE as well as by the SCO.

Comparing the tasks and activities of the SCO and OSCE provides the following picture. The OSCE realizes its aforementioned comprehensive approach to security in three 'dimensions'. The activities in the *politico-military*

¹³ See Table 1: Comparison between SCO and OSCE.

¹⁴ E. Bakker and B. Bomert, *The OSCE and the Netherlands as Chairman-in-Office*, The Hague, 2003, pp. 1-2.

dimension of security include commitments for conflict prevention and resolution. The OSCE also seeks to enhance military security by promoting greater openness, transparency and cooperation. Activities in the *economic and environmental dimension* include the monitoring of developments in this area, with the aim of alerting any threat of conflict; and assisting in the creation of economic and environmental policies and related initiatives to promote security in the OSCE region. The *human dimension* aims to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; to abide by the rule of law; to promote the principles of democracy by building, strengthening and protecting democratic institutions; and to promote tolerance throughout the OSCE area.¹⁵

The application of the three OSCE dimensions to the SCO Charter provides the following overview of the tasks and activities of the SCO:

1. *The politico-military dimension.*

The promotion of a new democratic, fair and rational political international order; to strengthen mutual trust, friendship and good neighbourliness between the member states; to cooperate in the prevention of international conflicts and in their peaceful settlement; to consolidate multidisciplinary cooperation in the maintenance and strengthening of peace, security and stability in the region; to conduct activities in the field of disarmament and arms control; to jointly counteract terrorism, separatism and extremism, to combat illicit narcotics and arms trafficking and other types of criminal activity of a transnational character.

2. *The economic and environmental dimension.*

The promotion of a new fair and rational economic international order; to encourage efficient regional cooperation in such spheres as trade and the economy, environmental protection, energy, transport, credit and finance; to facilitate comprehensive and balanced economic growth; to coordinate approaches to integration into the global economy. The economic starting points are realised by fostering a favourable environment for trade and investment with a view to gradually achieving the free flow of goods, capital, services and technologies. Furthermore, this is also done by the effective use of the available transportation and communication infrastructure, by improving transit capabilities and the development of energy systems. The ecological dimension is put into practice by sound environmental management, including water resources management in the region, by the implementation of joint environmental programmes and projects; and by mutual assistance in preventing or solving natural and man-made disasters.

3. *The human dimension.*

The promotion of a new democratic order; to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the international obligations of the member states and their national legislation; to facilitate social and cultural development in the region through joint action for the purpose of a steady

¹⁵ The three OSCE dimensions, <http://www.osce.org/about/18807.html>.

increase in living standards and improving the living conditions of the peoples. The implementation of the human domain is attained by the development of interaction in such spheres as science and technology, education, health care, culture, sports and tourism.¹⁶

Comparing the tasks and activities of the OSCE and SCO — as laid down in their formal policy documents — leads to the conclusion that to a large extent both organisations have an equal line when it comes to the military-political dimension of security, especially in aspects such as mutual trust, CSBMs, arms control, conflict prevention, and combating terrorism and transnational crime. In addition to this, elements of the economic, ecological and human areas of security — e.g. encouraging democracy and educational, economic and ecological cooperation, as well as human rights and freedoms — are also similar.

Differences

As for membership, the factual status of the observers of the SCO is quite different from that of the partners for cooperation of the OSCE. Whereas the latter participate at a distance — as genuine ‘observers’ — the position of the SCO observers is much more than that. Considering the primary activities of the SCO — political consultations, (counterterrorism) exercises, and economic (energy) cooperation — and the intensity of the participation of the observers in these areas, provides evidence of the fact that not so much Mongolia, but Iran, Pakistan and India have in fact the status of a lower-level member state, which is a different approach to the one which the OSCE takes with its partners for cooperation. The reason for the strong involvement of the SCO observers in this organisation is probably to be found in the fact that they already had strong ties with the major actors of the SCO — Russia and China — before joining as observers. Iran, for instance, is known to be one of the best buyers of Russian arms as well as of nuclear energy technology and is together with Russia a primary global natural gas producer. Likewise, India also already had cooperation with Russia in the fields of importing conventional arms and nuclear energy. As a counter-weight, China demanded the access of Pakistan as a SCO observer. Therefore, the status and treatment of associate partners between the OSCE and SCO is of a different nature.

In contrast to the similarities in formal principles, goals and tasks — as found in the policy documents of the SCO — in practice the activities of the SCO demonstrate disparities and deviation compared to those of the OSCE. This is especially noticeable in the human dimension of security. As is shown in Table 1, the basic aspects of this field of security are also included in the list of the SCO: human rights and fundamental freedoms. The first difference is that other, more far-reaching elements of this domain are missing in the list of the SCO:

¹⁶ Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Charter, http://www.sectsco.org/news_detail.asp?id=96&LanguageID=2.

election assistance projects, media freedom, minority rights, the rule of law, tolerance and non-discrimination. Secondly, apart from the listing of 'human rights' in its Charter, these principles are only rarely mentioned in the statements of the SCO and, if so, are often connected to government authority. For instance, the Declaration of the SCO Summit in Astana, July 5, 2005, mentioned as aspects of human values: stimulating mutual interest, tolerance, the abandoning of extreme approaches and assessments and the development of dialogue.

However, the declaration also stated that in the area of human rights it is necessary to respect strictly and consecutively historical traditions and national features of every people and the sovereign equality of all states.¹⁷ At a press conference in Beijing on 1 July 2005, SCO Secretary General Zhang Deguang, referring to the Andijan unrest of May 2005, stated that it is not right to confuse the problem of human rights and the problem of the struggle against terrorism, since, to date, there have not been any difficulties in interpreting any event whether it is an act of terror or is related to an issue of human rights.¹⁸ These examples make clear that the SCO considers human rights mainly in the context of — or better subordinated to — counterterrorism and state sovereignty, and hardly as a separate primary dimension of security policy.

A third divergence in the human dimension is that, in general, the SCO member states have a more autocratic rule than that of most OSCE member states, which affects the human rights conditions in these countries. The SCO governments put the mentioned aspects on a lower level on their agenda. Next, they do not so easily tolerate being criticised on these matters, which they regard as purely internal affairs. This attitude of the SCO rulers is reflected in their track record in human rights conditions, which, according to Human Rights Watch, demonstrated a deterioration in all six member states in 2006.

In China the authorities greeted increasing social unrest with stricter controls on the press, the internet, academics, lawyers, and non-governmental organizations. In Russia, the Kremlin has tightened its grip on human rights organizations and other independent institutions and grave human rights abuses persist in Chechnya. Kazakhstan has flouted some of its fundamental human rights obligations, tightening control over independent media, interfering with the political opposition, and initiating politically-motivated lawsuits against its critics.

In Uzbekistan many local and international civil society groups and media outlets have had to cease their operations, and human rights defenders and independent journalists have been imprisoned or have fled the country. In Tajikistan in the months preceding the November 2006 presidential election, the government harassed independent media, with applications for new and

¹⁷ Declaration of Heads of Member States of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Astana, July 05, 2005, http://www.sectSCO.org/news_detail.asp?id=500&Language ID=2.

¹⁸ Press conference in Beijing on July 1, 2005 SCO Secretary General Zhang Deguang, <http://www.sectSCO.org/html/00626.html>.

renewed broadcast licences being arbitrarily denied, and private television stations being crippled by huge licence and operating fees. And in Kyrgyzstan President Bakiev — having come to power after the March 2005 ‘Tulip revolution’ on the promise of reform and a commitment to democracy, openness, and respect for fundamental human rights — has largely failed to promote these principles.

Furthermore, in most of the SCO countries non-registered Christian churches and other undesirable religious groups are being regularly harassed and their leaders arrested.¹⁹ Consequently, the actual human rights situation in the member states is far removed from the human rights principles mentioned in the formal documents of the SCO.

Other disparities between the OSCE and SCO are to be found in the politico-military dimension. To begin with, although the SCO and OSCE have a mutual approach in the military-political domain of security, there is one aspect that is not dealt with, or is only dealt with to a minor degree, by the SCO: democratic control over the armed forces. The reason for the absence of this task is probably also found in the nature of the SCO governments. Often they envisage their military as an immediate and decisive instrument of power of the executive, which should not be limited by democratic control. Thus, not surprisingly, the (deputy) ministers of Defence of the SCO countries have often had a career in the military or security services or are still on active duty.

Furthermore, with the exception of combating terrorism, which – due to its transnational character — is conducted collectively, SCO states consider national security to a large extent as an internal issue. Secondly, the SCO has some tasks and activities in the politico-military dimension which cannot be found in the list of the OSCE. These are, for instance, tasks relating to current security threats: counteracting separatism and extremism, as well as illegal immigration. In this case the SCO, by its very nature, is a state-oriented organisation, the objectives of which focus on the survival of the sovereign state, and the current leadership in particular. The OSCE, on the other hand, is more of an entity-orientated organisation, and thus is inclined to conduct conflict prevention by negotiating between governments and minorities, i.e. emphasizing diplomacy instead of the use of force.

Another dissimilarity concerns both the economic and human dimensions. The SCO — otherwise than the OSCE — highlights regional cooperation in a number of cultural, scientific and economic fields. The reason for this is perhaps the desire of mainly former Soviet Central Asian republics to strengthen their geographically and historically-founded ties. Due to its broader membership, in the OSCE these cultural bonds are less developed and when it comes to Europe, they are usually taken care of by the European Union (EU).

¹⁹ HRW World Report 2007, <http://hrw.org/wr2k7/index.htm>; HRW religious freedom, http://hrw.org/doc/?t=religion&document_limit=120,20; Friedensstimme, <http://www.friedensstimme.nl/index.php?paginaID=28>; Kyrgyzstan plans to crack down on religious groups, RFE/RL NEWSLINE, Vol. 11, No. 127, Part I, 13 July 2007.

Consequently, the OSCE and SCO share tasks and activities especially in the military-political domain and to a lesser extent also in the economic, ecological and human realms of security. However, when it comes to the human dimension, the two organisations digress.

Cooperation between the SCO and OSCE

Right from the start of the SCO there have been relations with the OSCE. The OSCE, in its 2001 Ministerial Council decision on combating terrorism, under the Bucharest Plan of Action for Combating Terrorism, called upon the participating States and the Secretariat to broaden dialogue with partners outside the OSCE area. The SCO was invited to various OSCE activities, for example to participate in an OSCE meeting with regional and sub-regional organizations and initiatives on preventing and combating terrorism, held on 6 September 2002.²⁰ Moreover, in August 2003 the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, the then Dutch minister for foreign affairs, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, stated in Beijing that he expected that typical OSCE priorities, such as combating terrorism, economic cooperation and promoting human rights, would be priorities for the SCO as well. To encourage these topics he invited the SCO to participate in a seminar on terrorism and human rights in The Hague in September 2003.²¹

Furthermore, at a conference on CSBMs in Northeast Asia in Korea in September 2003 it was discussed whether the OSCE should become more relevant and actively engaged in reaching out beyond its area as well as sharing its experiences with other regions. At the same Korean-OSCE CSBM workshop, it was suggested that the OSCE should consider possible contacts with the SCO on how to exchange lessons learnt between the OSCE and the SCO.²² SCO representatives further attended the Meeting of the OSCE partners for cooperation in Vienna in April 2003 and the OSCE Conference on Preventing and Combating Terrorism in Lisbon in September 2003.²³ On 15 January 2004 the OSCE Secretary General attended the inauguration of the Secretariat of the SCO in Beijing. At that event he met the SCO Executive Secretary, Ambassador Zhang Deguang, to discuss possible areas of co-operation. The OSCE was also present at the opening ceremony of the Executive Committee of the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) in Tashkent in June 2004.

Furthermore, an SCO representative participated in the July 2004 round-

²⁰ Workshop entitled 'Applicability of OSCE CSBMs in Northeast Asia Revisited', 22-23 September 2003, Seoul, Korea, http://www.osce.org/documents/ec/2003/09/21938_en.pdf.

²¹ http://www.osce.org/documents/html/pdftohtml/634_en.pdf.html.

²² http://www.osce.org/documents/ec/2003/09/21938_en.pdf; Report on Actions of OSCE Bodies and Institutions to Prevent and Combat Terrorism, 30 November 2003, http://66.102.9.104/search?q=cache:7_Q1WKFPGC8J.www.un.org/Docs/sc/committees/1373/masterfinal.doc+osce+sco&hl=nl&ct=clnk&cd=89&gl=nl

²³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, 2004/01/07. <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/topics/sco/t57970.htm>.

table on extremism in Kazakhstan, organized by the OSCE Centre in Almaty.²⁴ On 5-7 April 2005, an OSCE workshop on the legislative implementation of universal anti-terrorism instruments was held in Tashkent, organized by the UN in collaboration with the OSCE Centre in Tashkent and the RATS of SCO. The UN, OSCE and RATS agreed to jointly provide legal advisory services and training in the field of counter-terrorism and the rule of law at the request of the participating states.²⁵

However, in spite of the numerous mutual activities and meetings, the OSCE does criticise the SCO for not living up to its principles, especially in the field of the human domain of security. Speaking at a Capitol Hill meeting in late June 2006, the OSCE Chairman and Belgian foreign minister Karel De Gucht expressed his concerns about the SCO. He stated that the SCO is developing a philosophy on stability, but that the role of common, democratic principles is lacking. He added that the fear of those who see the SCO as a competitive organization to the OSCE was justified. At this meeting Roman Vassilenko, the press secretary at the Kazakh Embassy in Washington, said Kazakhstan's position as a member of both the OSCE and the SCO proved that any Western fears were unfounded. He also mentioned that Kazakhstan's bid for the OSCE chairmanship in 2009 could be a key for the West to find a bridge to the SCO and to increase its clout in the Central Asian part of the world, since the OSCE has never placed the chair east of Vienna.²⁶

Assessment of the comparison between the SCO and OSCE and the outlook for further cooperation: Comparison

The aim of this work was to provide a comparison between the SCO and the OSCE. At first sight, when assessing the official documents of both organisations — with comprehensive security as their starting point — it is evident that they share many principles, goals and activities, as laid down in the three domains of security, i.e. the *politico-military dimension*, the *economic and environmental dimension* and the *human dimension*. This is reflected in the development of the relationship between the SCO and OSCE, which has been one of a constructive attitude on both sides. The fight against terrorism and other politico-military security-related issues have been the main topics of cooperation since the start of this relationship. However, when it comes to

²⁴ Annual report on OSCE activities 2004. http://www.osce.org/publications/sg/2005/04/14066_270_en.pdf; Report of the OSCE Secretary General, Ambassador Jan Kubis, 12th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Sofia, 6-7 December 2004. http://www.osce.org/documents/mcs/2004/12/3892_en.pdf.

²⁵ OSCE Centre in Tashkent, Newsletter, Issue 2, March-April, 2005, http://www.osce.org/publications/cal/2005/06/14901_384_en.pdf.

²⁶ K. Stuhldreher, 'New security group led by China and Russia causes concern', website of World Peace Herald, July 10, 2006, <http://wpherald.com/articles/195/1/New-security-group-led-by-China-and-Russia-causes-concern/China-and-Russia-are-driving-forces-behind-SCO.html>.

practising the human dimension, the SCO and OSCE digress. The human dimension has a different value in these organisations. In the case of the SCO the continuous violations of human rights within these countries demonstrate that this dimension of security is the least important one for this organisation, as it is subordinated to (the prolongation of) the often autocratic governments.

Thus, although formally the SCO and OSCE might to a certain extent appear to be two of a kind, in practice however, due to profoundly diverting views in the human dimension, the organisations differ a great deal. Nonetheless, this does not have to mean that intensified cooperation would be undesirable or impossible. If the OSCE would choose to strengthen its ties with the SCO the human dimension is likely to be made a central issue. Of course the SCO member states are not eager to reply positively to such an emphasis. However, when favourable trade-offs can be made in the other security dimensions which are of more importance to the SCO — the politico-military and economic/ecological components — this might open the way for a mutually acceptable intensified cooperation in the shared tasks and activities as mentioned in Table 1, but also in the human rights domain. The Central Asian members which are members of both the OSCE and SCO could possibly, because of this double membership, play a key role in such a direction of further cooperation with shared objectives.

Further cooperation between the SCO and OSCE

Current policies by the Central Asian states, and Kazakhstan in particular, might develop into the aforementioned key role. In order to establish intensified cooperation between both organisations, Kazakhstan's bid for the OSCE Chairmanship in 2009 could become a crucial factor. In December 2006 the OSCE decided, considering that Kazakhstan had committed itself to a programme of political action and reforms and to exercise leadership in upholding the OSCE's commitments, norms and values, that the OSCE would return to the offer of Kazakhstan assuming the OSCE Chairmanship at the latest at its meeting in Spain in 2007.²⁷ In April 2007 the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, the Spanish foreign minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, toured Central Asia, meeting top officials in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The reason for doing so was that fully engaging Central Asia in the OSCE's activities was a priority for the 2007 Spanish OSCE Chairmanship. The OSCE Chairman-in-Office stated on 10 April 2007 that Kazakhstan's aspirations to hold the OSCE Chairmanship in 2009 would be well served by the country showing concrete democratic reforms that would positively affect its citizens' lives.²⁸ Although, currently, Kazakhstan's bid for the OSCE Chairmanship has

²⁷ Brussels Ministerial Council Decision No. 20/06 on the future OSCE Chairmanship, 7 December 2006, http://www.osce.org/documents/mcs/2006/12/22613_en.pdf.

²⁸ Activity report of the Chairman-in-Office, 25 April 2007, http://www.osce.org/documents/cio/2007/04/24160_en.pdf.

not yet been decided, it is worth discussing its possible consequences.²⁹ The OSCE rightly addresses Kazakhstan with regard to its obligations as laid down in the principles of the organisation. Nevertheless, while encouraging Kazakhstan to take further steps in the direction of democratic development and guarantees of human rights, the possibility of a Kazakh OSCE Chairmanship offers considerable windows of opportunity.

In deciding upon this chairmanship the OSCE should take into consideration that for reasons of gaining energy (sources and security) other international actors — for instance NATO and the EU — are also increasingly involved in Central Asia and the neighbouring South Caucasus.³⁰ With a Kazakh chairmanship the OSCE's influence on further developments in Central Asia alongside those of other Western actors would be increased. Perhaps a Kazakh chairmanship of the OSCE could even act as an all-encompassing coordination point for these organisations. But also apart from 'joint action' with other international actors, a Kazakh OSCE chairmanship could also serve as an instrument for persuading the other Central Asian OSCE and SCO members to become more committed to the priorities and principles of the OSCE.

²⁹ This article was completed in July 2007.

³⁰ Energy security entails an assurance for the producing side that gas and oil are produced, transported, delivered and paid for without hindrance. To the consuming side, energy security means the undisturbed receipt of resources at reasonable prices, which ensures that their states continue to function with stability. For a further explanation of energy security and the activities of other international organisations in Central Asia, see M. de Haas, A. Tibold and V. Cillessen, *Geo-strategy in the South Caucasus: Power play and energy security of states and organisation*, The Hague: Clingendael Institute, November 2006.

Table 1: Comparison between the SCO and the OSCE³¹

	SCO	OSCE
Year of formation and of foundation as an organisation respectively	1996 / 2001	1973 / 1995
Geographical areas of member states and observers	Europe, Near East, Central Asia, South East Asia	Europe, Central Asia and North America
No. of member states	6	56
Shared membership	Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan	
Observers (SCO) and partners for cooperation (OSCE)	Iran, Pakistan, India and Mongolia	Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Afghanistan, Japan, South Korea, Mongolia, Thailand
Nuclear powers (member states and observers)	Russia, China, India, Pakistan	USA, Russia, France, UK
Other organisations related to	UN, CIS, ASEAN	UN, EU, Council of Europe, NATO
Shared tasks and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening mutual trust, friendship and good neighbourliness • Enhancement of military security by promoting dialogue, transparency, co-operation and commitments on military conduct • Disarmament and arms control • Border security and management • Police and other law enforcement assistance programmes • Conflict prevention • Combating terrorism • Combating transnational organised crime such as drugs, human beings and arms trafficking • Promotion of democracy • Supporting economic growth and cooperation • Education programmes • Environmental activities • Promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms 	
Different additional tasks and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counteracting separatism and extremism • Counteracting illegal immigration • Regional cooperation in culture, sports, tourism, science and technology, trade, energy, transport, credit and finance, health care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic control over the armed forces • Combating transnational organised crime such as corruption, money laundering • Election assistance projects • Minority rights • Rule of law • Tolerance and non-discrimination

³¹ History of development of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation , <http://www.sectSCO.org/html/00035.html>; Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Charter, http://www.sectSCO.org/news_detail.asp?id=96&LanguageID=2; OSCE Facts and figures, <http://www.osce.org/about/19298.html>; OSCE activities, <http://www.osce.org/activities/>.