




Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg



The Quandaries of Promoting Democracy in Central Asia: Experiences and Perspectives from Europe and the USA

Report of a Transatlantic Workshop at the
Centre for OSCE Research in Hamburg

February 2007

edited by
Anna Kreikemeyer and Wolfgang Zellner

Working Paper 18



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Executive Summary

In February 2007, the Centre for OSCE Research (CORE) in Hamburg organized a transatlantic Workshop on questions of democracy promotion in Central Asia. More than 30 participants in the areas of science and policy, among them well-known experts on democracy promotion from major implementation agencies in the U.S. and Europe, as well as regional experts took part. Nearly half of the guests came from the U.S., the others were from Germany, Great Britain and Russia. The overall objective of the workshop was to increase mutual understanding of different U.S. and European approaches to democracy promotion and their different domestic political environments, to compare these concepts and to discuss a common understanding of a realistic strategy for democracy promotion. This CORE Working paper presents a workshop report consisting of two parts: the keynote speech of Martha Brill Olcott and a compilation of relevant contributions of individual workshop participants.

In her keynote speech on “Democracy Promotion in Central Asia: From High Expectations to Disillusionment” Martha Olcott sets the tone by underlining the necessity of thinking anew about perceptions, strategies and instruments of Western Central Asian policy. In her view, none of the five Central Asian states has fulfilled democratic aspirations. This gives her reason to ask: What do we do with our disillusion? What can we learn from our false hope of fifteen years ago? What might we have done wrong?

In her view the amount of money available for programmes in, for example, the areas of corruption, reform of the legal and educational sector as well as border management was sharply limited by the patterns of disbursement of funds. That is why these problem areas continue to exist, and some of these problems have become exacerbated, making more, not less, money necessary to successfully address them. She asks for a more proactive Western engagement and a self-critical reflection of the image they have in the Central Asian states.

From her overview of the changing political realities of the individual states of the region come five recommendations on how outside actors, seeking to advance the acceptance of OSCE norms, can maximize the chances of success. *First*, the West should make more of an effort to view events in this region through a locally focused lens. *Second*, she opposes the tendency to use certain “outlying” states in the region, like Uzbekistan, as ways to appease Western domestic human rights constituencies. *Third*, she criticises the U.S. and its various European partners for having made a big mistake in not trying to engage the existing governments but in making policy by sanctions. *Fourth*, in her view EU-Uzbek and U.S.-Uzbek relations could have been handled much more skilfully, in a way that made the Uzbeks more responsive to Western criticisms of them. *Fifth*, the West should learn to be more flexible in dealing with these states. An approach with a democracy check-list and the respective affirmative or sanctioning action should be avoided. *Finally*, she suggests the West should move away from a “we-they” understanding of events in this region, and learn to be more inclusive in its approach. Thus the prevailing manipulation by the Central Asians themselves could be avoided.

This Workshop report, a compilation of both written and oral contributions, focuses on preliminary answers to six questions. These deal with the reasons why the original aims of democracy promotion have not been achieved in Central Asia and what lessons can be learned from democracy promotion in general as well as from election monitoring and human rights protection in particular. Special attention is given to the case of Uzbekistan. The participants also discussed possible future strategies of democracy promotion and perspectives for research on democracy promotion in Central Asia.

From the contributions to the workshop it became clear that there are both quantitative and qualitative differences in the U.S. and European approaches to democracy promotion. Nevertheless both actors support the democratization policy of the OSCE.

Central Asia has proven to be a difficult region for the promotion of democracy and human rights. The main barrier is seen in the revival of neo-patrimonial structures, especially among the ruling elites. The interests of these determining strata of the societies have led to concepts of gradualism in democratization, to a break down of the social contract, but also to facade behaviour and mistrust towards Western external actors and to criticism, for example, of the activities of the OSCE.

Thus the results of about 15 years of democracy promotion have been unsatisfactory. They reflect the insufficient prerequisites for democratization policies, misunderstandings and the need to better integrate the local context. In the area of election observation we can speak about technical improvements, but many critical questions remain. Human rights promotion has not been very successful in Central Asia due to a general regression in the human rights situation in various countries, but also to failures of human rights promoters.

Future policies of democracy promotion still rely on the existing structures and instruments of the OSCE with slight differences between U.S. and the European approaches consisting in less or more emphasis on integrative political dialogue. From the researchers' side, however, renewed efforts at democracy promotion should be more oriented towards a deeper understanding of regional and local power structures as well as political culture and social change of Central Asian societies.

The Annex includes the program of the workshop and a list of participants.

Martha Brill Olcott

Democracy Promotion in Central Asia: From High Expectations to Disillusionment

I

None of the five Central Asian states have fulfilled the democratic aspirations. What do we do with our disillusion? The elites in the Central Asian countries were very firmly entrenched, and most of those within the elite who favoured democratic style political reforms largely opted to continue working with the conservative and dominant part of the ruling elite rather than joining with the political opposition, many of whom were at least publicly committed to introducing constitutional reforms that offered the promise of bringing their countries more in line with the rule of law and expanded opportunities for political participation.

II

What can we learn from our false hope of fifteen years ago? I think that it would be a mistake to conclude that these cultures are in some way incompatible with political participation or with adopting political systems based on rule of law. I consider what mistakes we may have made in trying to spread democratic reform in the region. I consider what has changed in the region and only then should we consider what we should do next. Some form of participatory society could have emerged in each of these countries had we been more proactive in our approach to them. In fact I believe that democratic societies can still emerge.

III

Let us look at what we might have done wrong. We were not proactive enough in promoting either political or economic reform in the region. For the U.S., the new interest in the region was driven by a desire to facilitate military operations in Afghanistan, and in both Europe and U.S. to strengthen energy security and the energy security of their allies. And the timing of U.S. and European interventions may not necessarily coincide with periods in which outside efforts to influence outcomes will yield fruit. The shortage of funds available for technical assistance for political and economic reform in the region makes it more critical that the potential benefit of assistance be maximized. One of the justifications given for the relatively small sums involved in political and economic technical assistance is the complaint that these countries are unable to absorb larger sums.

I have a few comments in that regard.

First, corruption is a problem in Central Asia and is likely to continue to be a problem well into the future. In addition to the revival of patrimonial politics that independence has brought in many parts of the region, Central Asians were no strangers to corruption from Soviet-era economic practices. But to be effective in this region we must expect that part of assistance will be lost to corruption. We must fight against this, and build in constraints to minimize its impact. But expecting that some of the assistance money being offered will be lost to corruption is unfortunately part of the price of engagement in the region. Furthermore, I would argue that corruption exists even in most of those programs which we believe to be “corruption-free”. It is just that we don’t know enough about those involved in the project to

have been able to spot it. Certainly there were several areas in which all five Central Asian countries could have absorbed a great deal more assistance, without a serious risk that corrupt practices would have diminished the funding to a point that it was not effective.

There was a real hunger for projects that would reform the legal sector. This includes programs designed to help reform the judiciary, to reform legal training, and to reform the security forces, both police, and other special internal security forces. There were U.S. programs in all of these areas, but their reach was influenced by the size of the allocations made to them. Some of these policies have led to impressive changes, especially in both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, where even today reform has gone far enough that we are able to project the shape of what a fully reformed system could look like, even though it is far from being implemented. Funding for these projects continue, but was never expanded to meet the demand, although somewhat larger sums of money were spent than might initially appear, given that projects for reform of security forces are sometimes funded as part of defense budgets and do not necessarily appear in declassified versions of national budgets. The same was also true of programs that were designed to increase the administrative capacity of local and regional governments. These are programs that were cut back even faster than legal and judicial reform, because of concerns about working directly with non-democratic regimes as well as declining technical assistance bases.

Everyone in the region favoured educational reform, and with the exception of Turkmenistan, their understanding of reform was fairly consistent with how it is understood in the West. The education systems of the region have fallen into varying states of decay, from near cataclysmic collapse in the case of war-torn Tajikistan, to the deliberate dismantlement of the system for ideological purposes in Turkmenistan, to problems of serious declines in the quality of rural education just about everywhere, but most seriously in Kyrgyzstan, and to a lesser extent in both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

One of the great risks that Central Asia faces is that of declining literacy and educational attainment. During Soviet times there were, for all intents and purposes, universal levels of literacy, and some of the highest levels of popular attainment of secondary, specialized secondary and higher education anywhere outside of the U.S., Europe and the most developed of the Asian economies. This is no longer the case, which means that the next generation is likely to be quite different from their parents.

But U.S. focus in particular was more on curriculum development, and promoting new content in civic education, and to a lesser extent on English language education, something that does serve these countries well, as it increases the number of people able to study abroad. But it in no way deals with the inequities developing within the countries themselves between those with access to the best public schools in the leading cities or to private education and those without this access. From the very outset, most Central Asian countries were eager to get assistance to deal with deteriorating conditions in rural education, both in terms of their deteriorating physical plants, the critical shortage of teachers and other educational personnel, and the acute shortage of new texts for mathematics, science, and technical subjects (especially in the national language, but also increasingly in the Russian language as well). To a limited extent, some of these areas have been, and continue to be dealt with through projects of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), but the need continues to increase, and almost no new sources of funding have been identified, especially those which are eager to fund the education system's infrastructural reform or those dealing with the reform of traditional core subjects, such as science and math.

Finally, there are a host of problems related to the management of borders, which could have been addressed far more effectively ten or fifteen years ago. These are topics the EU and U.S. are not very interested in, partly because they have been addressing some of the recovery problems in Afghanistan. But solving them now will be far more costly, and requires dealing with regimes that are relatively hostile to or frightened by integration.

Ironically, ten or twelve years ago, Uzbekistan would have been a relatively enthusiastic participant in many of the regional trade and border projects that the U.S. is proposing as part of its CAREC¹ initiative, to create trade ties across Afghanistan, in part to help fuel state-building efforts in that country, a project that also enjoys support from the ADB. This comes after a relatively unsuccessful effort by the Europeans to push TRACECA, the Central Asian Caucasian transit corridor. Ironically, if the current focus had been applied at the beginning of the TRACECA² project, that project might have succeeded, because at the time TRACECA was introduced, Uzbekistan had yet to adopt its isolationist stance (which came after bombings in Tashkent in early 1999). Now however, the focus on meeting the technical needs of trade, through uniform tariffs, customs and improving the quality of border control could actually facilitate trade if there were sufficient economic demand and transport infrastructure.

Much like the first time around, the unsettled nature of Afghanistan remains a major problem for trade with the open ports in south Asia, but the lack of cooperation of Uzbekistan with this project compounds the inherently difficult transit through the region, forcing the various Central Asian countries to opt for longer routes and routes with more difficult terrain that bypass Uzbekistan. In fact, Uzbekistan has also proved an obstacle to free trade efforts sponsored by Russia, and still has not signed a host of agreements necessary to integrate it into the economic community which includes Russia, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan. And these Moscow-based efforts will also become more problematic after Russia and Kazakhstan join the WTO.

In all of these areas, the amount of money available for programs in the field was sharply limited by the patterns of disbursement of funds. Most of the U.S. foreign assistance money in this area goes to projects that are top-heavy with salaries for Western consultants or the Western NGOs which are the project facilitators; at its most extreme, the latter can go up to sixty percent of the grant. In addition, a lot of the money earmarked for “educational” exchanges funded by the U.S. government, actually goes to the U.S. institutions who host them, or U.S. airlines and motel chains. Moreover, there has been minimal follow-through on the fate of those who come to the U.S. (with U.S. funding or private funding). There are alumni associations for these people - some they have organized for themselves - but there was never any conditionality attached to subsequent placement for these people. Those who have returned home - and large numbers simply don’t - find it very hard to fit back into government or society.

IV

These problem areas continue to exist, and some of these problems have worsened, making more, not less, money, be it local or international, necessary to successfully address them.

The region has changed over the past fifteen years. Unlike fifteen years ago, when the question of its ability to survive as a nation was at stake, Kazakhstan has become the most

¹ Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation.

² Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia.

stable country in the region, accepted by powerful nations like Russia and China as having a right to exist, and even as one with a viewpoint that at least needs to be heard although not necessarily heeded. There is no real likelihood of state collapse in this country. Kazakhstan has become a self-confident nation, led by a highly experienced and almost supremely confident political leader. Nazarbayev and much of the senior Kazakh elite now believe that their resources, wealth and pace of economic development give them the right to carve out an international position of their own, one of relative prominence.

For a variety of reasons, some accidental, others not, Kazakhstan's leadership have staked a great deal on getting the chairmanship of the OSCE for 2009, and while they have been willing to have the decision of the OSCE postponed, they have not been willing to delay their chairmanship. A large number of OSCE states are supporting Kazakhstan's chairmanship and their CIS colleagues are doing so enthusiastically. The EU members are divided on this question, most hoping that the postponement of the decision until late 2007 will encourage Kazakhstan to make further, and much needed, political reforms. The U.S. and U.K. accepted the postponement of the decision, but have been highly critical of Kazakhstan's bid, because of that country's very imperfect record of democratic reform. But Kazakhstan's unwillingness to accept the U.S. and U.K. request that they defer their chairmanship until 2011 suggests that there will be a large price to pay if Kazakhstan is turned down as chairman of the OSCE.

There is a real question about how much the OSCE, the EU, its member states or the U.S. can do to build democratic societies in Central Asia if these states are not going to be willing participants in the process. For that reason the decision about Kazakhstan's chairmanship is likely to become a decisive one for the future of that organization. If Kazakhstan is turned down, on matters of principle, for its failure to live up to enough of the OSCE goals, the OSCE is likely to become less important in Central Asia. It will certainly find it more difficult to spread its message of democratization there and in the states of the CIS more generally. While an OSCE headed by Kazakhstan will certainly not be a guiding light for the spreading of democratic institutions, it would allow the OSCE to continue its important election monitoring work in Central Asia and the south Caucasus. It might also make the OSCE a more effective organization in achieving security cooperation in these regions and make it easier for Vienna to offer the good auspices of the organization in situations requiring conflict resolution.

In the only state in Central Asia that has had regime change that focused on a seriously flawed election process, the political situation in Kyrgyzstan has now gone beyond the point at which it is easily influenced by outside actors. The political system has entered a system of sustained and quasi-managed chaos, in which competing political groupings are finding it difficult to achieve a sustainable formula. The political system is fragile, and has been undermined by a period of protracted negotiation between key political and economic groups within the country, which have provided very unstable results. Kyrgyzstan has introduced two different constitutions since November 2006, after spending roughly a year debating three other variations.

It seems unlikely that Kyrgyzstan will become a fully failed state, since two of its neighbours, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, see their own stability as tied directly to that of neighbouring Kyrgyzstan. Both these states, most likely in concert and in consultation with Russia, their CSTO³ partner, would seek ways to stabilize the situation in Kyrgyzstan, preferably short of the direct application of force. But the presence of a U.S. base notwithstanding, the major

³ Collective Security Treaty Organization.

influences in this period of crisis are more likely to be these very concerned neighbours than the OSCE members from Western Europe or from across the Atlantic. But without doubt, the Kyrgyz will continue to reach out to the OSCE and other multilateral organizations, and especially to international financial organizations, for assistance. Moving beyond the current level of political confusion, though, will be a time consuming and quite possibly not a highly satisfying activity.

The societies in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan have changed dramatically over the past fifteen years, in ways that are likely to increase the burden of those interested in building democratic, participatory or civil societies in this part of the world. In all three countries, there has been a steady erosion of secular values in society. Overall, the spread of traditional values, be they national-cultural, traditional-religious or fundamental religious has proceeded far more rapidly than the spread of Western “civic cultural” values. This is also true of large pockets of population in Kyrgyzstan and smaller pockets in Kazakhstan, but in the latter case in particular, there is a growing sector of society that has been exposed to and shares general “Western” or secular values.

This is not the case in either Uzbekistan or in Turkmenistan. Gradually over the last fifteen years, those who were committed to introducing a Western style political regime in Uzbekistan as their first priority, political reform “first-ers”, have been marginalized in Uzbekistan. Most have left the country, although some of the human rights activists among their numbers have even gone to jail. What remains in Uzbekistan is a group I would term economic reform “first-ers,” secular (either according to the Soviet understanding or the Western understanding of the term), those who believe that the country is in desperate need of economic reform. Most of these people accept the argument that the expansion of the rule of law is critical to ensure their success, particularly with respect to the protection of property. Many of these people would like Uzbekistan to attract more foreign direct investment. They also understand that Uzbekistan will have substantially less international credibility if it doesn’t accept some of the European and OSCE norms in particular. But traditionally such “economic first-ers” have generally been a group that Western NGOs have been reluctant to engage with, preferring to work almost exclusively with the “politics first-ers.” Many in the Uzbek elite would like to see their country have greater engagement with the international community and increased assistance on meeting some of its “human needs” based problems. However, it is far less clear that the Uzbeks would accept international conditionality.

Turkmenistan is entering a period of transition and great potential risk. The challenge the outside community faces is how we can increase our leverage in this country. The democracy-building and assistance community will face a stark choice, whether to work with the new president, to help him achieve what he claims is his goal - achieving gradual political reform. Or alternatively, to view him as politically corrupted, because of the undemocratic nature of the way he took power, and, as many Turkmen opposition figures based outside of the country argue, refuse to engage with him. Part of the answer will depend on President Gurbanguly Berdimukhammedov himself, on whether, or not he makes good on his promises to open his society to outside influences, by allowing access to the internet, and beginning the process of legal reform. It is also unclear whether he will agree to work closely with a group of Western interlocutors even as he does so. He has expressed willingness to have the OSCE observe his election, an invitation that Vienna decided not to fully accept, in light of how little time they were given to create a full-scale observation plan. Instead they opted to send a smaller fact-finding team.

The option of not-engaging with Berdymukhammedov at all implies that it is somehow in Turkmen and also in Western interests for the current government to fall. This thesis, which was also advanced by many critics of President Karimov, at the time of the disturbances in Andijaan, is predicated on the assumption that Western influence will increase in the event of regime failure. Certainly, this is something that the Western-based opposition promise. Yet, at least with respect to Turkmenistan, it is hard to believe that any subsequent regime would have much flexibility in the short term to reduce Russia's role in that country's economy. The sale of Turkmenistan's gas to Russia provides the predictable and sustainable cash transfers that the regime in Ashgabat depends upon for its survival, going a lot further to help subsidize the country's unreformed agricultural sector, which in turn provides the income for the bulk of the population. Signing bonuses for future transport or gas and oil development projects will leave short-term sustainability issues unresolved.

Similarly, a dose of realism is necessary to evaluate the political and economic prospects in Tajikistan. Ten years after the signing of the Accord of National Reconciliation which ended that country's civil war, political institution building has largely stalled in that country. President Rakhmonov has extended his power base in the centre, although the political system remains a partly decentralized one, where some local officials have areas of great discretionary authority, but all other power is vested in a strong presidential system. NGOs, at least those with explicitly political agendas, are increasingly more restricted in their activities, but the sector remains an important source of income for the white collar class in the country. Groups working with social and economic issues generally are able to operate relatively freely, and continue to enjoy strong international technical support. But the country still remains a captive of its geographical position, with economic development opportunities sharply diminished by the instability in Afghanistan, trade restrictions introduced by Uzbekistan, and the continued energy interdependence of these two states.

V

Given the changing political realities of the region, how can we outside actors seeking to advance the acceptance of OSCE norms, maximize the chances of success for our effort?

First, we should make more of an effort to view events in this region through a locally focused lens. Too much of what we have done, or not done, in the region was shaped by what we thought about outside influences that were active there. First we relegated the region to Russia, then when we decided that Russia was a negative influence, we sought to counter Moscow's engagement through embracing regimes that were often far more antithetical to basic civil and political rights than the Russians were.

Secondly, in more recent years, there has been something of a tendency to use certain "outlying" states in the region, like Uzbekistan, as ways to appease our own domestic human rights constituencies. This is especially true in the current political environment. The U.S. and the U.K. are deeply entrenched in a military operation in Iraq that has rooted itself in the alleged defense of a "freedom" agenda, but they have pursued this agenda with a strategy that has clearly gone wrong. "Talking tough" in a country determined (although not necessarily accurately) to have little security importance, may help create an image of successfully advancing our principles. In this respect we must feel confident that we are not creating policies that may be against our respective national security interests simply to appease those "who shout the loudest."

Thirdly- and this is closely related to the first point - I think that the U.S. and its various European partners are making a big mistake in not trying to engage the existing governments. EU or U.S. sanctions, absent strong international backing, do not have the intended effect, forcing a level of deprivation upon these governments that is sufficient to modify their behaviour. We need to ask what sanctions are for. Are they to oust regimes, or is it to change their behaviour? The experience with sanctions is a very mixed one, and in recent years they have not resulted in regime change. But, as I have already stated, a policy designed to achieve regime change makes me very uncomfortable, particularly in a situation like Uzbekistan, where there are few people in any Western capital who would feel comfortable predicting what would come next. The devil one knows certainly does seem better than setting up an unregulated struggle for power in which no strong pro-Western political forces have been identified, and in which state collapse is a decided possibility.

Now, I don't believe that there was an interest at the senior policy-making level in any of the Western capitals that sanctions should have the effect of ousting Karimov. However, there was the hope that these sanctions would prove costly to Tashkent, and that they could modify the Uzbek regime's behaviour. But they did not have the desired effect. EU sanctions against Uzbekistan are now being reduced because of the perception that they are doing more harm to the security needs of some of the EU states (most particularly Germany which depends upon a military base in Uzbekistan to support its military mission in Afghanistan). But one of the reasons that sanctions didn't work, was that other countries, Russia and China, were happy to race in to help Uzbekistan compensate for the loss or reduction of U.S. and European engagement. The same situation is likely to occur if the U.S. introduces sanctions against Uzbekistan, since the country has been labelled a "country of particular concern" for its treatment of religious freedom issues.

The Russians and Chinese, both in their bilateral relations, and in the context of their shared membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, stress their common values with the Uzbeks. They, unlike the U.S. and EU, highlight the need to respond decisively in the face of terrorist threats, in their analysis of the events in Andijaa in May 2005. This notwithstanding, the Uzbeks do not want to become any sort of international pariah, or to have the movements and free action of their leaders and their families restrained in Europe or in the U.S.. Yet they don't want to have to publicly admit any errors, or ask forgiveness, by, for instance, creating an OSCE or EU sponsored formal investigative commission to examine the events in Andijaa. The current EU strategy of targeted engagement with the Uzbek government shows more promise for modifying the behaviour of the Uzbek state than the previous sanction regime, although the current level of engagement is limited and the concessions of Tashkent modest by any criteria.

Fourthly, it would honestly be in our own interest to at least listen to the criticisms that the Central Asians offer of our behaviour, both more generally and with respect to other policies toward them. I believe that EU-Uzbek and U.S.-Uzbek relations could have been handled much more skilfully, in a way that would have made the Uzbeks more responsive to Western criticisms of them. The "War on Terror" has introduced a set of new ambiguities into the international arena. Western democracies have granted limited use of extraordinary powers to the executive branch, licensing special tribunals, and removing some basic legal protections when national security is said to be threatened. We view the threats we face as real, and so serious that they justify the temporary suspension of some of our long accepted civil rights. Unlike in Central Asia, we do not view these threats to our national security as the consequence of bad politics on our part. This is a distinction that foreign, and especially non-Western leaders find rather self-serving. U.S. military forces made use of torture, and there

have been efforts to identify those responsible for these excesses and to punish those responsible. But at the same time U.S. security forces have expanded the definition of what are acceptable interrogation techniques, techniques that may well be viewed by others as qualifying as torture. The U.K. did much the same when confronted with the threat of terrorist attacks in England by those pressing for changed policies in Northern Ireland. Those in Central Asia, who are most cynical, simply argue that powerful states can maintain a double standard forcing weaker states to accept standards that they themselves will not accept. Inevitably there is an element of truth to such allegations, as stronger states do define international standards for all others, especially when there is unanimity of view among a large number of Western states. But we might do better at modifying the behaviour of weaker and less democratic states if we were at least a little more cognizant of the ways in which what is “reality” to us is really something of a subjective vision of reality.

Fifthly, we must learn to be more flexible in our approach to dealing with these states. We shouldn't approach them with a democracy check-list, and if they fail to do anything on it - register Western-funded NGO's, offer an unfettered political environment for independent media, offer no roadblocks to the functioning of non-governmental and opposition political groups - we mark them down as failing and oftentimes restrict certain features of our diplomatic or foreign assistance engagement with them.

The litmus test of registering foreign-funded NGO's seems a particularly unfortunate yardstick for measuring the willingness of political regimes in Central Asia to engage in systematic political reform. Most countries do have limitations on the activities of foreign funded actors. It would be misplaced sanctimoniousness for us to argue that enhanced political participation will only occur if Western-funded organizations are the initiators of political reform. Democratic societies will only develop in Central Asia if there is strong elite and grass roots support for their emergence. Technical assistance from Western democracies can certainly play a useful role in this process, but this can be facilitated in a number of ways, by engaging with both pro-government and independent political groups, seeking the political maturation of both. They can also ramp up outreach and training activities held outside of the region, and apply strong pressure to ensure the safe passage of participants both leaving and returning to their countries.

Finally, we should move away from a “we-they” understanding of events in this region, and learn to be more inclusive in our approach. We need to do a better job of avoiding manipulation by the Central Asians themselves. Classic are the multiple messages they send to their various international partners, stressing their anger with Moscow in Washington, and their frustration with Washington while in Moscow, and repeating much the same pattern in Beijing and in the various European capitals. The only thing that changes is the identity of “the big bad wolf”. This increases the tendency for developing competing programs and projects. Russia and China have one form of security engagement with the Central Asian states, through the CSTO and Shanghai Cooperation Organization. We have another, using NATO. And more is at stake than the content of military reform. We also continue to develop very conflicting notions of threat, and how threat is appropriately avoided and addressed. And even in trying to solve common problems, like the situation in Afghanistan, the means sought to provide solutions, in this case a NATO-led military and internationally funded reconstruction effort, doesn't provide equal entry for all parties. The differences are underscored each time there is an election, and the CIS gives high marks to the same elections that the OSCE fines seriously flawed, or at least still substantially lacking in freeness and fairness. Where does it make our expectations more or less realistic?

Workshop Report

This report integrates written and oral contributions made in the course of the workshop's presentations and discussions and focuses on the following questions:

- Why have the original aims of democracy promotion not been achieved in Central Asia?
- What are the lessons learned from democracy promotion?
- What are the lessons learned from election monitoring?
- What are the lessons learned from human rights protection?
- What are future strategies of democracy promotion in Central Asia?
- What are perspectives for research on democracy promotion in Central Asia?

Why have the original aims of democracy promotion in Central Asia not been achieved?

The original Western expectation of a more or less linear development from liberalization through democratization to democratic consolidation has been disappointed. What is happening in Central Asia now is a transition from authoritarian rule to “something else” not yet sufficiently defined.⁴ From the contributions to the workshop it became clear that Central Asia is proving to be a difficult region for the promotion of democracy and human rights. Regional experts speak of a revival of neo-patrimonial structures, especially among the ruling elites (Eric McGlinchey, David Hofmann). The interests of these determining strata of the societies lead to concepts of gradualism in democratization, to a breakdown of the social contract, but also to façade behaviour and mistrust towards Western external actors and to criticism of, for example, the activities of the OSCE.

In 1991, the five newly independent states in Central Asia had neither a tradition of state-building nor of democracy. Their political culture, partly inherited from the Soviet system but partly a product of traditionalism could not but add strong authoritarian and clannish flavour to the transition. A process of re-traditionalization was characterized by a strengthened role for traditional institutions which could provide social comfort to the population in the absence of any reasonable state policy in this sphere (Irina Zvyagelskaya).

Thus the transformation the Central Asian republics have been going through turned out to be a much more ambiguous process than could have been expected. For the local leaders the issue of sovereignty was the most precious prize they won after the demise of the USSR. Closely linked to that was the interest in maintaining power, i.e. control over vast streams of revenue in the political economy. Under conditions of a neo-patrimonial society, this meant the tight informal control over revenue streams (energy, customs, privatization, etc.) to ensure proper patronage networks and the full control over key appointments. In this way Central Asian political elites are amazingly rational actors (David Hoffman).

The coincidence of state building and transformation in Central Asia increased the influence of those elites who could make use of both their formal and informal ties for ensuring that property was redistributed in their favour and to the benefit of their immediate entourage. In this way clans got hold of unprecedented economic resources. As a result, the real winner of the competition over the redistribution of property became the clan system (Arne C. Seifert).

⁴ For an overview see Andrea Berg / Anna Kreikemeyer (eds), *Realities of Transformation. Democratization Policies in Central Asia Revisited*, Nomos Publishers, Baden-Baden 2006.

In each of the Central Asian states this has had the consequence of a break-down of the social contract. Governments are unresponsive to the needs and desires of the population. The emphasis of state-citizen relations is on coercion and co-optation, not constituency building. The isolation of those in authority from the population and the leadership's imperviousness to popular criticism and dissent mean that abusive officials are able to violate rights with impunity and government officials do not pursue rights reforms (Acacia Shields).

We can observe that Central Asian governments try to cope with democratization demands made by external actors by invoking the "language of stability" as opposed to democracy, which is associated with chaos and instability (David Hoffmann). For Marat Sarsembaev, the sole participant from Central Asia at the workshop, the first anchor of stability is economic development as a necessary precursor to progress on democratic reforms, especially after the collapse of the USSR. In his view, in those days, almost all the countries of the Central Asian region were occupied with economical survival and it was rather difficult to advance far-reaching political reforms as well.

This thinking led to a characteristic preference for gradualism in democratization. In the view of many in Central Asia, the process of transformation should be gradual and controlled due to the absence of a democratic tradition. For centuries the common consciousness of the peoples of the Central Asian region has developed along totalitarian lines. Reconstructing it by the roots within a decade or two is no easy task. Democracy-building is seen as a long process which requires patience. Nowadays, political reforms have begun to advance in, for example, the field of education (Marat Sarsembaev). Due to this self-perception there is also a frustration with Western criticism, which claims to have a litmus test for 'real democracy' (Anna Matveeva).

At the same time the governments pay lip service to international standards (Acacia Shields) and democratic "mimicry" has become a priority (David Hoffmann). This kind of façade behaviour leads to double standards and, as a result, a superficial top-down democratization policy can easily be integrated into governance strategies of local leaders (Irina Zvyagelskaya).

The colour revolution in Kyrgyzstan served to some extent as a brake on advancing democratic transformations in the region. A prevailing Central Asian perception is that orange and rose revolutions produce democratic back-sliding more than they solve problems. They are seen as impatient actions of some Western countries to introduce democracy in the region and cause suspicion in the countries of the Central Asian region. Thus, the ideas of secular democracy in Central Asia have been discredited even more strongly since the Kyrgyz 'revolution'. This kind of 'democratization' has been viewed as an influencing tool. The democratization discourse is regarded by the leaders and large segments of society as planting Western models in a region where social and political realities are different. There is little desire to engage with the concept of value-based 'democratization' (Anna Matveeva).

Together with other factors, this kind of mistrust leads to increasing criticism and has found its expression in CIS documents signed by all the Central Asian States, such as the Moscow Declaration and the Astana Appeal of 2004. The signatories of these documents criticize the OSCE for focussing too strongly on human rights issues; they depict OSCE field missions as intrusive instruments meddling in internal affairs, and they attack OSCE institutions, especially ODIHR, for being too autonomous (Margit Hellwig-Bötte/Michael Nowak).

What are the differences between U.S. and European Approaches?

From the discussions it became clear that there are both quantitative and qualitative differences in U.S. and European approaches to democracy promotion. Nevertheless, both actors support the democratization policy of the OSCE. On a global scale, roughly one half of the investment in the field of democracy promotion comes from U.S. institutions, public and private alike, while the other comes from European sources, predominantly public institutions. U.S. democracy promotion programmes in Central Asia are implemented by a range of public (State Department, U.S.AID) and private (Soros Foundation, IFES, NDI etc.) institutions.

The U.S. government devoted over 27 million dollars to democracy-support programmes in Central Asia in 2006. These cover the whole spectrum of democracy, rule of law and human rights promotion at both governmental and civil society levels and rely on a broad menu of programmes: reporting and advocacy by well known human rights organizations, assistance and capacity-building in human rights promotion, support and technical assistance to NGOs and, finally, training for human rights activists. Particularly since the colour revolutions, the room for manoeuvring by NGOs receiving U.S. support has been severely restricted by almost all Central Asian governments. A cornerstone of U.S. democracy and human rights promotion is support for the independent media. In both fields the U.S. makes use of an International Visitors Leadership Program to facilitate an exchange of ideas and views with participants from Central Asian states. However, the U.S. also supports the activities of other well-known international democracy institutions (Kyle Scott).

On the European side, the EU is present with its “European Initiative for Democratisation and Human Rights (EIDHR)”.⁵ This programme is an integral part of the EU’s association and co-operation agreements with the Central Asian states. In the years 2003-2004, the EU provided 1,5 million Euro in this programme for Central Asia. EU projects are mostly implemented by other international organizations, especially the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), but also by NGOs on the ground. By indirectly supporting NGOs in the host countries, the EU tries to contribute to the strengthening of civil societies. Support for democratization, good governance and the rule of law as well as the fight against racism are seen as most important. Apart from the EU and OSCE it is primarily public institutions from individual European countries that fund additional programs (Anna Kreikemeyer).

At the beginning, the difference in the European and U.S. approaches to democracy promotion was especially pronounced. The U.S. interpreted it as a tool for ensuring security and influence. It seemingly believed that democracy could be implanted in any society regardless of whether it shared liberal values or not. Only a couple of years ago, Frederick Starr praised the level of democratization in Afghanistan and hoped for an even brighter future. After bitter experiences in the Middle East, the U.S. seems to be in the process of re-evaluating its approaches to democracy promotion paying more attention to cultural factors. The EU has always been much more cautious in its approach to democracy promotion. True, it also started with promoting democratic institutions like free elections rather than democratic norms, but it clearly demonstrated more patience and understanding. Fortunately its policy was lacking the messianic vision of the U.S. (Irina Zvyagelskaya).

⁵ The February 2007 workshop did not yet include the developments and changes resulting from the June 2007 EU Central Strategy.

The U.S. and the European countries unite their efforts within the OSCE, which has developed into the leading agency for election observation, election support and democracy promotion within the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space. It has a record of more than ten years of democracy promotion and seven years of election monitoring in Central Asia. As the Organization involves states from Vancouver to Vladivostok, specific strategies of the USA and of European states can be discussed in one institutional context. In addition, OSCE values and commitments serve as a common normative basis. The OSCE is a challenging institution for the Central Asian states. On the one hand, the Organization offers them equal status and a forum for raising their concerns. They are, therefore, interested in using the possibilities the OSCE offers. This is reflected in Kazakhstan's application for the 2009 OSCE Chairmanship. On the other hand, the democratization policy of the OSCE is increasingly perceived as interference in domestic affairs. For this reason, the OSCE has attracted harsh criticism from Russia and Central Asian states, summarized in the 2004 Moscow Declaration and the Astana Appeal (Wolfgang Zellner).

What are the lessons learned from democracy promotion?

Democracy promotion in the post-Soviet space started in the early 1990s. While Central Asia has always been included in these efforts, major Western initiatives for this region only began after the mid-1990s and have gained particular relevance in the post-9/11 environment. The workshop participants came to the conclusion that the results of about 15 years of democracy promotion are unsatisfactory. They pointed to the insufficient prerequisites for democratization policies, misunderstandings and again the need of integrating the local context. However, compared to the Soviet period, it is now possible to talk about a relative success of democratization. During the workshop, specific lessons learned from election monitoring, human rights promotion and good governance were discussed in more detail.

The original aims of democracy promotion in Central Asia could not be achieved because they represent a set of good but not well-grounded intentions. Laws and institutions have been introduced all over the region, following the pattern of Western democracies, but their application by no means conforms to the minimal requirements of Western standards. Thus, it has become obvious that democratization policies cannot be implemented without the prerequisite of liberal norms in a society (Irina Zvyagelskaya).

Looking back, it is clear that there were some misunderstandings at the beginning of the 1990s. Central Asian States obviously had only a limited understanding of what they were signing up for when they joined the CSCE in 1992 and accepted CSCE commitments, among them the 1991 Moscow Document in which participating States declared "categorically and irrevocably [...] that the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension of the CSCE are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned". However, there were also misunderstandings on the side of CSCE countries "west of Vienna" (Margit Hellwig-Bötte/Michael Nowak). These misunderstandings were due to misperceptions, to mistaken expectations and, on the side of the Western states, to a lack of information. Central Asia was practically unknown to them, they did not understand the complex challenges that these countries were facing, and up until now, they have not had an integrated strategy for dealing with the region (Beate Eschment).

Nonetheless, the Central Asian elites more or less characterize the contemporary situation as democratic, which has caused a complete misunderstanding of democracy among the

population and may lead to a loss of credibility. That is why it is important not to disregard the local context and the real needs of people on the ground. Strategies of empowerment and a bottom-up approach are often overlooked (Anna Matveeva). However, a comprehensive bottom-up empowerment policy, aiming primarily at the economic and social support of broad groups of the society is still quite unworkable (Wolfgang Armbruster). Most of the democratization projects are not only a threat to ruling elites but fall short of meeting the immediate needs of the people. They fail to address issues in their environment, such as the corruption of local administrations, the prohibitive behaviour of the state against small trade and bazaar business, or the threat to the survival of cotton-growing farmers as a result of the imposition of state prices. On the side of the external actors, a limited understanding of this social fabric has led to an exaggerated faith in the civil society, and a narrow understanding of what it comprises in Central Asia. The question has also arisen to what extent NGOs can be taken as a voice of society, if they are ultimately accountable only to donors (Anna Matveeva).

To evaluate the current state of democracy promotion in Central Asia one has to first choose a reference point. It seems, all developments should be measured against the Soviet period. The relative success is that they now formally have multiparty systems, NGOs, regular elections, and mass media which, by comparison to the Soviet period, look more decent. However, actual working political parties and NGOs based on a vibrant civil society are very much underdeveloped (Irina Zvyagelskaya).

What are the lessons learned from election monitoring?

Election observation in Central Asia is seen as a major area of democratization assistance. Even though it has been actively promoted by the OSCE over the last 15 years, it has not been a great success on the Central Asian side. In the workshop we asked to what degree Central Asian states were genuinely interested in democratic elections and, focusing on OSCE election observation, what progress has been achieved, what has been learned about local adaptation to external demands for elections, what are specific areas of progress and specific areas in which progress was lacking? Summarizing the contributions, there is an overall critical assessment of the effects of election observation, with slight positive elements at the horizon, for example in Kazakhstan. Many critical questions remain, however.

The Copenhagen Document of 1990 is a particularly important point of reference for the definition of democratic standards. In Art. 6, the “participating States declare that the will of the people, freely and fairly expressed through periodic and genuine elections, is the basis of the authority and legitimacy of all government”. On the basis of this and other election-related commitments, ODIHR has conducted a number of election observation missions in Central Asia, e.g. assessing two presidential elections and two parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan respectively since 1999, as well as one presidential and two parliamentary elections in Tajikistan since 2000. Also, limited election observation missions were conducted for parliamentary elections in Uzbekistan in 1999 and 2004, and ODIHR dispatched an election support mission for the presidential elections in Turkmenistan in 2007. Although the findings of these missions in part differ greatly from each other, all final reports note deficiencies in the fulfilment of important OSCE standards and commitments (Margit Hellwig-Bötte/Michael Nowak).

In part because of the aspirations of Kazakhstan to chair the OSCE in 2009 and in part because Kazakhstan is the most prosperous and stable of the Central Asian states, there has

been technical progress in their elections over the past few years. Elections are, by now, perceived as a meaningful political event in the society. In the presidential elections in December 2005, improvements in the work of the Central Election Commission could be observed. However, there are a number of fundamental aspects of the election process in Kazakhstan that remain to be improved in order for elections to be assessed as meeting OSCE commitments (Jonathan Stonestreet, Robert L. Barry).

In general, the following critical assessments were given with respect to election observation in Central Asia:

- In some states, elections are not observed at all since from the very beginning it was clear that they do not conform to democratic standards.
- In the countries where elections have been observed, there have been improvements in the technical organization of the elections and the legal procedures accompanying them. Nevertheless the statements of the OSCE almost always stress problems in the registration of candidates, during election campaigns and on election day, i.e. in the course of the realization of the new legal procedures.
- We can observe a lack of meaningful competition. There should be real competition in seeking office, and institutions which promote compromise and dialog following elections. These preconditions do not exist, either in Turkmenistan at the bottom of the “stans” or Kazakhstan, at the top. Furthermore, there has been little forward movement in the last decade (Beate Eschment).

Summarizing the overall assessments of the contributors it can be said that election observation has made the polls freer, but not necessarily fairer.⁶ Nevertheless, election observation is not useless or doomed to fail. It may have resulted in only minor improvements, but this is a success in its own right. Without international attention the situation would have been exacerbated, as illustrated by the cases of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Election observation missions should be continued, but should focus on making progress on ‘fairness’. The focus should no longer only be on the election periods, as this produces a ‘superficial understanding of the local political dynamics’ and the resulting OSCE analysis is ‘misleading about more general trends’⁷ (Beate Eschment). The title of the OSCE’s Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights makes the correct connection. The creation of democratic institutions must precede, not follow the holding of free and fair elections (Robert Barry).

Nevertheless critical questions remain:

- What is the effect of election observations for the legitimization of autocratic regimes? (Terrence Hopmann)
- Are there evaluations on the meaningfulness of elections in the perception of the population? (Anna Kreikemeyer)
- Are there specific strategies for achieving more democratic elections other than trying it again and again?

⁶ See Anna Wolf, *Möglichkeiten und Grenzen internationaler Wahlbeobachtung, dargestellt und analysiert am Beispiel Kasachstan*, [Opportunities and limits in international election observation: the case of Kazakhstan], end of degree thesis, Otto Suhr Institute, Free University of Berlin, summer semester 2006.

⁷ See Erica Marat, *The State-Crime Nexus in Central Asia: State Weakness, Organized Crime, and Corruption in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan*, Silk Road Paper, Oct. 2006, p.70.

What are the lessons learned from human rights protection?

Just as democratization has followed a disappointing trajectory in the region, human rights promotion has not been very successful in Central Asia either. On the one hand, this is due to a general regression in the human rights situation in various countries, on the other hand the human rights promoters have failed too. Despite the differences between the more publicly oriented U.S. policy (Kyle Scott) and a more critical dialogue strategy of the EU (Margit Hellwig-Bötte, Rolf Schulze), human rights activists criticize the deficits of the international community in coming up with a consistent strategy of conditionality in the case of human rights violations by Central Asian governments (Acacia Shields).

While each of the Central Asian states is unique and has suffered its own set of human rights problems since gaining independence, there are also some points of commonality: To their credit, the governments of Central Asia have ratified a wide array of international instruments guaranteeing fundamental human rights. All have accepted the universality of human rights and validity of international law designed to protect them. All of the Central Asian governments have also committed egregious violations of these international human rights obligations. And today, each of the Central Asian states is experiencing its own human rights regression.

Perhaps the most vicious assault on fundamental freedoms has taken place in Uzbekistan, where government forces massacred civilians in 2005 and where the government continues to demonize dissent, and jail and torture the dissenters (see below). A close competitor for the 'worst of the worst' is Turkmenistan, where the policies of the late President Saparmurad Niyazov created a stifling climate of fear throughout the country, and where virtually every civil, political, economic and social right on the books has been violated. The successor government has vowed to continue Niyazov's policies, which could well mean a continuation of the abuses that earned Turkmenistan the reputation of being one of the most repressive states in the world. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have benefited considerably from the comparison with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, but cannot really be assessed to be much more than just 'the best of the worst.' In Kazakhstan, the battle for oil wealth and the political power necessary to attain it has led to the persecution of opposition politicians and independent media. In Kyrgyzstan, disillusionment with the abuses and corruption of the Akaev government led to a popular uprising and ouster of the president. Since then, however, rampant police abuse and official corruption continue to rise while vital state institutions such as the judiciary flounder. In Tajikistan too, the quality of rights protection has deteriorated and the administration's unyielding grip on power has stifled opposition voices.

What is at the heart of the problem of human rights abuse in Central Asia?

First, the lack of respect for human rights is most obviously due to a lack of political will on the part of regional government leaders. Few in power are anxious to release their hold on power and give everyone else a chance to exercise their rights. It is therefore up to the promoters of human rights to force compliance.

Second, the failure of the human rights promoters. The blame does not lie with the brave local rights defenders daily risking their health, jobs, families, and even their lives to question those in authority and protest government repression. To the courageous few who continue to fight for freedom armed with insufficient resources and little *blat* (russ. informal connections) to protect them, all praise is due. However, what can one say but 'shame' on those who have the power to change things and do not use it?

Third, the governments of Europe and the United States, and the institutions to which they belong, have failed miserably to apply the strategies necessary to promote improved human rights protection in Central Asia. Western governments have failed to stick to the principles essential to successful rights promotion: consistency, conditionality and consequences.

Successful rights promotion in Central Asia requires decisive, sustained and unified action on the part of a group of international actors. When key actors break ranks or otherwise undermine efforts to achieve human rights progress, the entire endeavour is weakened and can easily be thwarted and fail. When, however, a human rights message is delivered in a consistent and forceful way by a diversity of international actors, it is possible to elicit a response and achieve progress.

Conditionality is most effective when the “prize” is withheld (or there is a plausible threat that it will be withheld) until compliance is achieved, as compared with attempts to elicit reform after the fact (i.e. by “smoothing the way” with rewards to abusive governments in the hope that this will encourage engagement and eventual compliance). Applying benchmarks can be a particularly successful use of conditionality, as benchmarks alert non-compliant countries that they are expected to deliver certain outcomes and put them on notice that failure to deliver on these specific points will result in negative consequences.

National campaigns for human rights promotion are as vulnerable as the activists that launch them. The international community depends greatly on the information and actions of national human rights defenders to achieve progress on human rights. These defenders undertake such information gathering and rights related activities at enormous risk.

The broader lesson is clear: to change course and achieve real progress on human rights in Central Asia, international rights promoters will have to begin to implement principled policies based on decisive, sustained and unified action. If governments interested in seeing rights improvements stand tough and back up their own policies, maybe we’ll find that the intractable abuses in Central Asia aren’t so intractable after all (Acacia Shields).

The special case of Uzbekistan

In her contribution, Acacia Shields devoted special attention to the question of how the international community could have reacted more effectively with respect to the human rights violations in the course of the 2005 massacre in Andijaan. In her view, the so-called rights promoters’ response to the massacre of civilians in Uzbekistan stands as a stark example of their failures. The U.S. denounced the massacre and called for an international investigation. Uzbekistan’s President Karimov went to China, said no to the investigation, and kicked the U.S. off his airbase. Almost two years later, the U.S. has yet to levy any consequences against Uzbekistan for the atrocity of the massacre, its cover-up, or the subsequent flagrant violations of human rights in the country.

The EU policy has been more nuanced, or maybe just more hypocritical. In any case, it has highlighted the ineffectiveness of the Europeans’ fragmentary human rights policy. Following the massacre, the EU made the decision not to sell Uzbekistan arms, not to give those with responsibility for the killings visas to its member countries, and to suspend part of its lucrative Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Uzbekistan. Individual members of the EU just as promptly went about undermining these sanctions and firming up their unilateral relationships with the abusive government. Unsurprisingly, the sanctions have failed and the

conditions the sanctions were tied to—including seeing an independent international investigation into the massacre—have not been met.

What are future strategies for democracy promotion in Central Asia?

From the contributions on perspectives of democracy promotion we can learn that the workshop participants representing governments tend to stick to the existing structures and instruments, mostly the OSCE. The difference between the U.S. and the European approach consists in less or more emphasis on political dialogue. From the researchers' side, however, the implications for future strategic approaches to democracy promotion seem to be more oriented towards renewed efforts with major changes.

Kyle Scott pointed to the fact that, from a U.S. point of view, the assessment of the current state of democracy promotion in Central Asia, just like any other evaluation, calls for a well-defined set of criteria. Since all Central Asian countries are participating states of the OSCE, the sum of standards and commitments agreed upon since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 becomes a logical choice here. The OSCE field missions and institutions offer an array of programmes and capacity-building measures to increase the ability of governments to implement their commitments. Decisive is both the political will to adhere to OSCE standards and commitments and the ability to implement them. From the governments involved, the U.S. expects a readiness to accept the OSCE's offers and to co-operate with OSCE structures in a spirit of openness and mutual trust (Kyle Scott).

Fortunately, the need for a more structured approach to Central Asia has not only been widely acknowledged, it has also led to work on a new EU Strategy on Central Asia. The structures and specific expertise of the OSCE are taken into account here, especially – but not exclusively – in the field of good governance, human rights, democratization and the rule of law. In order for the OSCE to fully develop its potential, the issue of ownership is essential. Only if Central Asian States perceive the OSCE as *their* organization, will they strive for further implementation of standards and commitments. Therefore, it is crucial to take seriously the expectations that the region has of the OSCE. The readiness of Kazakhstan, for example, to assume the role of the OSCE chairman is very welcome. Naturally, the support for this endeavour comes with the expectation that Kazakhstan prove its willingness to undertake further reforms. Likewise, Central Asian calls for a stronger involvement of the OSCE in the political-military and in the economic and environmental dimensions must be answered – without, however, ignoring or discarding existing efforts in the organization's human dimension. At the end of the day, when it comes to democracy promotion, there is no good alternative to dialogue. The OSCE still has an important role to play in this context (Margit Hellwig-Bötte/Michael Nowak).

The debate on democracy promotion has led to dilemmas that cannot be solved with a master plan (Wolfgang Zellner). A certain disillusionment in the relationship towards Central Asia leads to the necessity to think again about Western perceptions, strategies and instruments in the policy towards this region (Martha Brill Olcott). A new democratization agenda needs to be re-legitimized, re-introduced and re-framed in a functional way, laying emphasis on its problem-solving capacities (Anna Matveeva).

Up to now external actors have contributed little to a differentiation between democracy promotion and support for colour revolutions. Given the latent instability in the Central Asian

region, Western democratization concepts should be embedded into comprehensive strategies of gradual change (Wolfgang Zellner).

In its strategy vis-a-vis the existing political systems in Central Asia, the West should be ready to face facts, take lessons from its own serious mistakes and shift to a more pragmatic strategy. Preconditions for “managing change”, meaning transfer of the Western type of democracy, its standards and values simply do not exist or have only a limited scope. What should be priorities? First and foremost, strengthening the partnership with Europe. To that end: consolidate the overall results of transformation achieved so far; enhance the process of economic reform; ensure that the process of state building can be continued under peaceful conditions; insist on the rule of law; stimulate a common understanding of international human rights principles, in particular the respect for individual rights and collective rights; combat poverty and economic inequities; keep up the relatively high level of education; develop strategies for co-operation with important strata of society (women, youth, intelligentsia) (Arne C. Seifert).

The process of democratization will obviously take a long time and can hardly be imposed from outside. Democratic institutions are not ends in themselves. Democratization should have roots within the societies. It can be assisted from the outside, but not only by planting certain democratic institutions in traditional societies, but rather by cultivating liberal values, by changing norms and traditions. There should be a more pronounced accent on education and on market and political reforms. Democratization should be perceived by people as a process which makes their everyday lives better and which brings long awaited justice (Irina Zvyagelskaja).

Property rights should not be conceived of as the starting or the ending point of a rule of law regime. Efforts to establish rule of law are dependent on numerous factors—one of the most important of which is the establishment of free speech. Only when there can be open investigation and criticism of those in authority will it be possible to establish a true and viable rule of law regime. Focusing on land rights may benefit a small sector of society, but it will establish, at best, a balance of self-interests and not true rule of law (Acacia Shields).

Concrete efforts to promote good governance must be able to cope with façade behaviour and double standards among the ruling elites (Anna Kreikemeyer).

External actors should learn more about different experiences, values and interests in Central Asia. Only by taking into account local perceptions and understandings, which vary between countries, sometimes even between regions, can we successfully transfer not only the rules of the game but also those values related to fairness to voters as well as to members of election commissions (Beate Eschment).

What are the perspectives for research on democracy promotion?

While most of the contributions were directed towards policy issues, some participants reflected on consequences for research as well: research on the target countries in Central Asia as well as research on the democratization policy itself and the results achieved up to now. Beyond that, the discussion highlighted some new research tasks ahead.

Democratization in Central Asia requires more research that must be conceptualized more carefully and it will take longer than expected. There is an urgent need to study the special

conditions, social structure and local perceptions in Central Asia, that lead to different experiences, values and interests and understandings (Beate Eschment).

We also need a clear definition of what democracy promotion is, to what extent it is embedded in or overlaps with other programmes (like human rights promotion) etc., an analysis of the objectives of democracy promotion and the assumptions upon which it is based, as well as an inventory of what projects have taken place. To answer this question we need some kind of solid evaluation of the results of democracy promotion. Some of this work has been effective, some has not. Some has been based on faulty assumptions and inappropriate goals. Other projects have failed because of improper implementation. It is not clear how success is defined or measured. Sometimes projects actually succeed in ways not planned although they may be failures in a technical sense. Furthermore, we have to analyze the politicization of democracy promotion by its proponents, by its implementers, by target groups and by analysts, as it is the most political form of foreign assistance, followed by the promotion of independent media (Aaron Rhodes).

In the field of democratization research, a comparison between modernization theories and more universalist cultural theories shows that, with respect to Central Asia, an analytic approach at a middle theoretical level seems most adequate for the regional characteristics (Eric McGlinchey). Besides the question of universalism versus particularism, the basic question arises of whether and to which extent norms can be fostered at all. Another question is to which extent the governance system of a state is merely an expression of the prevailing power structures (Irina Zvyagelskaja, Andrea Schmitz).

There is additional need for research on the following problems:

- Which middle level theories can serve as a basis for the explanation of social change in Central Asia?
- What do we know about the (in-)stability of regimes and societies in Central Asia?
- Who are the agents of change in Central Asia?
- Do we have solid evaluations of the human rights situations in Central Asia?
- What would be the elements of a concept of minimal democracy?
- Which „carrots“ can external actors use effectively in Central Asia?
- What could a new functional conceptualization of civil society in Central Asia look like?

Annex I: Program

Friday 9 February	<p>arrival</p> <p>19.30 Welcome Dinner, Elsa Brändstrom House</p>
Saturday 10 February	<p>9.00 Welcome and Introduction: M. Brzoska/W. Zellner</p> <p>9.15 - 9.45 Introductory lecture Democracy Promotion in Central Asia. From High Expectations to Disillusionment: M. B. Olcott Comments: W. Zellner</p> <p>9.45 – 10.00 Discussion</p> <p>10.00 – 11.00 <i>Panel 1</i> Promoting Democratic Elections in Central Asia: What Has Been Achieved? Chair: A. Rhodes Contributors: R. Barry, J Stonestreet, B. Eschment</p> <p>11.00 – 11.30 Coffee Break</p> <p>11.30 – 12.-30 Discussants: R. Schulze, T. Hopmann Discussion</p> <p>13.00 Lunch</p> <p>14.30 – 16.30 <i>Panel 2</i> Promoting Human Rights in Central Asia: What Is the Record? Chair: M. Hellwig-Bötte Contributors: A. Shields, K. Scott Discussant: W. Höynck Discussion</p> <p>16.30 - 17.00 Coffee Break</p> <p>17.00 – 18.00 <i>Panel 3</i> Promoting Democratic Governance in Central Asia: Barriers for External Actors Chair: F. Evers Contributors: G. Crawford, D. Hoffman</p> <p>18.00 – 19.00 Dinner</p> <p>19.00 – open Discussants: A. Seifert, J. Grävingsholt, A. Kreikemeyer Discussion Social Gathering Elsa Brändstrom House</p>

Sunday 11 February	9.30 – 11.30	<i>Panel 4</i> Between Liberalization and Autocracy: Consequences for Democracy Promotion in Central Asia Chair: W. Armbruster Contributors: A. Matveeva, E. McGlinchey, I. Zvyagelskaya
	10.30 – 11.00	Coffee break
	11.00 – 12.00	Discussants: A.Schmitz, K. Samuel Discussion
	12.15 – 12.30	Summary: W. Zellner
	13.00	Lunch
	14.00	departure

Annex II: List of Participants

<i>Name</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Nationality</i>
Dr Armbruster, Wolfgang	German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (ret.)	German
Amb. ret. Barry, Robert	US State Department	US
Prof Brzoska, Michael	Director, Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy (IFSH), Hamburg	German
Butcher, Duane, C.	Consul General, Consulate of the United States of America in Hamburg	US
Dr Crawford, Gordon	Senior lecturer in Development Studies, School of Politics and International Studies, University of Leeds	UK
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Dr Evers, Frank	Deputy head CORE/IFSH, Berlin	German
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