

## The OSCE of the 21st Century - A Departure for New Horizons?

### *Where Does the OSCE Stand?*

On the surface, the OSCE has been doing well at the beginning of this new century: It functions within the framework of the options open to it; in the last few years, it has to a great extent been able to broaden its task area regionally and thematically; it has around 20 efficient missions with around 4,000 mission members in the field; it has successfully mastered the new field of border monitoring; and it is preparing to establish a new pillar in its work by carrying out police-related activities. In the OSCE area of the 55 OSCE participating States, there is adequate reason to take action in all three “baskets” of the Helsinki Final Act. Conducting elections in the Balkans alone has become a permanent challenge. The implementation of military confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) functions extraordinarily well. At the Istanbul Summit shortly before the turn of the century, the adoption of the Charter for European Security marked a last highlight, for the present, in the history of the OSCE as a norm-setting security policy organization.

In the Istanbul Summit Declaration, the Heads of State or Government of the participating States stated: “Today, we adopted a Charter for European Security in order to strengthen security and stability in our region and improve the operational capabilities of our Organization (...) We need the contribution of a strengthened OSCE to meet the risks and challenges facing the OSCE area (...) We will work closely with other international organizations and institutions on the basis of the Platform for Co-operative Security, which we adopted as a part of our Charter.”<sup>1</sup>

There has not really been much progress made with this concept, namely the sustainable strengthening of the OSCE, since Istanbul: During the Austrian Chairmanship in 2000, the OSCE was caught up in a crisis that was no fault of its own, which started with differences of opinion on the manner, extent and speed at which the Istanbul commitments were to be fulfilled and which Russia used to call for a comprehensive reform of the Organization in the framework of the European security architecture. Objections were made, in particular, to the geographical imbalance, the unequal treatment of East and West; it was said the OSCE has kept a continually critical eye only on post-

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1 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Istanbul Summit Declaration, Istanbul, November 1999, in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (Ed.), OSCE Yearbook 2000, Baden-Baden 2001, pp. 413-424, here: p. 413.

Soviet space, but not on the other security-relevant phenomena in the Western part of the area covered by the Helsinki Final Act such as the conflict in Northern Ireland, Basque terror, xenophobia in Western Europe, the problem of Western countries being the destination countries for trafficking in human beings, extremism and separatism, the situation of minorities, migration problems or the big issue of terrorism.

When the two Missions to the Baltic states, the Missions to Riga and Tallinn, were shut down in January 2002 - against the will of the Russian Federation - this displeasure became particularly apparent because in the eyes of Moscow, of all missions those two were closed that had been established to deal specifically with Russian concerns, namely the rights of Russian minorities in Latvia and Estonia. A long debate on the disequilibrium in the budget followed and paralysed the OSCE into the spring of 2002.

Finally, the thoughts and actions within the circle of the 55 Permanent Representatives in the OSCE Permanent Council, were moulded by other considerations that all involved the repercussions of September 11: The willingness grew on all sides to use the advantages of the OSCE to combat terrorism to the full extent and not refuse to face the challenges of this phenomenon but rather to recognize that Europe and North America would have to move closer together to be able to maintain their own civilization. While at the beginning of the year, one was still hearing ironic questions from the Russians about the OSCE's death day, now things have a different tune: In a speech in Almaty, President Putin praised the OSCE as a strategically important organization in Europe.

The Bucharest Ministerial Declaration of 3/4 December 2001 had already implied this development; parallel to this the Decision on Combating Terrorism and the Bucharest Plan of Action for Combating Terrorism were adopted. In paragraph 8 of the Bucharest Ministerial Declaration, a course has been set which could change the face and the future of the OSCE fundamentally provided that all participating States have the political will to achieve this. It states: "We affirm our determination to address the threats to security and stability in the 21st century. We request that the Permanent Council develop a strategy for the OSCE to do its part to counter these threats. We request the Forum for Security Co-operation to make its own contribution, within its competencies and mandate."<sup>2</sup> Apparently, this phrasing, which was accepted equally by both the US and Russia, goes back to the conversations between President Putin and President Bush in Crawford, Virginia that had taken place a few days before the Bucharest Ministerial Meeting. This paragraph represents not more and not less than the directive to find a new road map, a new positioning for the Organization, which makes it fit and functional for the 21st century. In the summer of 2002, the Portuguese Chairmanship, per-

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2 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Ninth Meeting of the Ministerial Council, Bucharest, 3 and 4 December 2001, reprinted in this volume, pp. 391-417, here: p. 393.

haps predominantly due to the prior conversations between the two presidents, tasked the Permanent Representatives of Russia and the US in Vienna with presenting a first draft of a paper on how this perspective could be realized. All other states have been called on to contribute their deliberations on this so that a first orientation and/or concrete task directives can be given in the form of Ministerial Decisions, perhaps even by the Ministerial Meeting in Porto in December 2002. However, this task will not be fulfilled by merely looking for new diplomatic formulas that veil the problem but do not lead to a solution. It cannot mean fixing one's gaze on new expectations without making commitments, but that these expectations be given a concrete definition. This is the point in time to have the courage to dare to take a quantum leap ahead, which would not only revitalize the OSCE, but would give it the political foundation that befits it as the only comprehensive European security organization. No other organization in Europe has the advantage of linking both North American democracies with all European states as far away as the participating States in Central Asia, which guarantee that the OSCE today has a common border with China. If one adds the enormous interest of the OSCE partners for co-operation Japan, South Korea and Thailand to this, suddenly the old dream of a security zone in the northern hemisphere that reaches from Vancouver to Vladivostok is near enough to grasp. This is not a farfetched idea as the OSCE with its normative *acquis* and well-developed operational capabilities is recognized as an indispensable instrument of civilian crisis prevention. It does not remain static in the security policy environment, but must be ready to be anchored in a new environment at any given moment. The view to its potential and comparative advantage over other international organizations, also the EU, NATO and the Council of Europe, should not be obscured: Its flexible and rapid procedures, the equal integration of its participating States, its regional and operational capability to take action especially where other security policy actors have not shown these capabilities or do not want to become actively engaged politically and its extensive effect within civil societies, all speak convincingly for the OSCE.

One cannot reproach the OSCE of having a negative balance: Instead, for the year 2001, it produced on the whole very respectable results. It has proved its worth as one of the most important if not the most important organization for civilian crisis prevention: Its 20 field missions have performed efficient work and no one who takes civilian crisis prevention seriously would question the work of these missions. The OSCE also reacted quickly to the events of September 11 by adopting an action plan for combating terrorism as early as December 2001. It is the only organization represented in all five Central Asian states and contributes through its presence and its comprehensive political approach to the fact that particularly in this region the process of democratization and the development of the rule of law are not disregarded in the fight against terrorism. Through its Representative on Freedom of the Media *Freimut Duve*, it is taking care to see that the freedom of the media is preserved

in the entire OSCE area, in East and West, during this critical period. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has worldwide been given the highest praise for its project work and its work in conducting elections. The same is true for the work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoep until June 2001 and now Rolf Ekéus, who have worked discreetly in the background to prevent conflict. The OSCE has had many success stories it could boast, like coping with the crisis in Macedonia and in the Preševo Valley between Serbia and Kosovo. Its multi-ethnic police work, particularly in Kosovo and southern Serbia, is widely recognized; no one else can accomplish this work. Finally, it has an active Parliamentary Assembly, which in particular during the past few months above all has voiced the ambition that it would like to contribute politically to the work of the Organization and that it would give the impulses required to do this.

To a large extent, the OSCE was and still is also the anchor of conventional and military transparency in Europe: It offers the basis for an extensive dialogue on military doctrines and defence policy. Within the framework of the Vienna Document and the OSCE-supported CFE Treaty, it guarantees the core contribution to conventional stability, disarmament and arms control throughout Europe and Central Asia by implementing and evaluating military information exchanges, evaluation visits and inspections. It contributes substantially to the stabilization of the Balkans by implementing and monitoring the arms control regulations of the Dayton Accords. With the adoption of its Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, it made a most decisive and successful contribution to the development of the United Nations Action Plan on Small Arms. Finally, at the end of 2001, Russia was the last state to ratify the Open Skies Treaty, which is under the OSCE umbrella; this Treaty is the most far-reaching confidence- and security-building agreement covering Europe and beyond.

On the whole, the OSCE has been consolidated institutionally, its reforms have to a large extent been completed, its comparatively low budget of less than 200 million euro per year is astonishing: Germany contributes around 25 million euro per year; this is less than our contribution to the UN Sierra Leone mission alone. In view of the facts that the deficits in human rights, democracy and the rule of law continue to exist and that there is a necessity for military stability, transparency and confidence building in the entire OSCE area, this is not much. If the "Charter for European Security" adopted at the Istanbul Summit in 1999 were implemented, it would provide an extensive foundation for a pan-European security policy.

#### *What Is to Be Done with the OSCE?*

A look at the end of the year 2002 offers a view to new perspectives. In November at the NATO summit to be held in Prague, in all probability, the deci-

sion will be passed for large-scale NATO enlargement with up to seven new NATO member countries. In December at the Copenhagen European Council, it will become clear which countries will soon become members of the European Union. Neither will this be a small number. Will this lead to the European Union becoming an even more ambitious actor on the European stage? One who is by nature highly attractive to its member countries and who will develop new fields of activity? The job of taking over the tasks of the IPTF in Bosnia would actually have fit the OSCE like a glove, but because of European policy considerations it went instead to the European Union, namely as evidence that the European Security and Defence Identity was already capable of functioning. Thus it follows that it will be increasingly less compelling that only the OSCE be able to assume certain tasks which were assigned to it in the past. The more European countries orient themselves towards Brussels due to the political gravitation pulling them there, the wider the cleft will become. Thus it follows that the OSCE and the European Union must adapt to one another and both must do their part to implement the Istanbul Platform: It is co-operation that is necessary, not competition. As far as the human dimension is concerned, most non-EU countries in Europe pay closer attention to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg or to the Copenhagen Criteria, which seem to motivate them more strongly than an appeal to fulfil their OSCE commitments. The role of the EU progress reports in the debate on closing the OSCE Missions to the Baltic states is clear evidence of this. Even in places where admission to the EU is still a distant prospect, it provides motivation through the Stabilization and Association Agreements, which seems greater than that of the OSCE. Perhaps, because in contrast to the European Union, the OSCE cannot wield "sticks and carrots" - due to the consensus principle, it is left with little but appealing to the willingness and political will of its participating States.

Also the perspective of NATO membership and the confidence-building cooperation within the framework of the "Partnership for Peace" programme and in the "Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council" have weakened the interest in the OSCE as a framework for arms control transparency and confidence building, although the higher added value of substantial decisions in this area has been reserved for the OSCE. However, if for example Russia comes closer to its goal in the arms control policy area of becoming involved in NATO decisions, even this function will increasingly be passed on from Vienna to Brussels.

However, there is new interest in a security policy dialogue also in the OSCE. At a colloquium in June 2002 in Baden near Vienna, the US presented a proposal which was received with interest by Russian representatives: the establishment of a security forum that would meet at least once a year in Vienna at which high-ranking representatives from European capitals would gather to discuss and analyse the European security situation within the framework of the OSCE.

This proposal does indeed go back to Russian impulses. During the discussion on reform in the last two years, Russia has continually criticized the fact that the OSCE no longer assumes the original function given it by the Helsinki Final Act, namely to conduct a political dialogue. According to many observers, the debates in the Permanent Council have been reduced to mere pre-formulated statements. It is said that only in the Preparatory Committee, which always convenes prior to the Permanent Council, do such debates still to a certain extent take place - however, this is not considered enough. One remembers that years ago Russia had totally different plans for the OSCE: As the organization with the most members, it was to be placed at the head of all other European organizations, even NATO; decisions were to be taken jointly, also on enlarging the European Union and NATO.

The idea of this type of forum is irresistible, but it should be expressed more boldly: A European Security Forum should be created that deserves this name and that would place the OSCE in a position to associate with the other European institutions on the same political level. I am not talking about a European security council; this would neither be feasible nor desirable. However, if it is true that in the past ten years, in particular in the Balkans, the European institutions have daily proved that they can only cope with a large task by co-operating and not competing with one another, then also the OSCE must have a seat at the table in Brussels and not at the side table in Vienna. What speaks against a European Security Forum convening regularly in Brussels with an agenda that also affects all other institutions in which political strategies are discussed, tasks distributed, synergies produced and frictional losses avoided? If the NATO Secretary General, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy all met to co-ordinate for example the activities in crisis regions like Central Asia, Moldova, the Caucasus and the Balkans without political detours, this would have a decisive advantage: The countries that belong neither to the European Union nor to NATO - and this would still be a good half of all OSCE participating States - would also be involved in these European decisions - an immeasurable advantage.

If the political will for this kind of an institution existed throughout Europe, one would not need to waste a lot of time, energy or money to be able to produce this kind of political added value. What would make more sense than for the foreign ministers to tackle this issue at the OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting in Porto at the beginning of December and to give the Council the corresponding directives on this? There is already an OSCE Summit at the level of the Heads of State or Government planned for the year 2003. If it is to have meaning, then the role of the OSCE in the 21st century must be given a concrete definition. If after NATO and EU enlargement a new course has been set in any case, a political perspective must be defined for the approximately 30 states that do not belong to any other alliance than the OSCE. No

more but no less is asked, if the OSCE is to make progress in fulfilling paragraph 8 of the Bucharest Declaration.