

The OSCE and European Security – A Lithuanian Perspective

Remarks on the Nature of the OSCE

From its very inception, the CSCE/OSCE process has been the subject of differing interpretations of its political nature and objectives. Some viewed it as a visible manifestation of political détente in the East-West confrontation of the Cold War, a Vienna Congress-type pan-European arrangement reflecting a new consensus on the balance of power and spheres of influence; others saw it as a kind of multilateral pact under which the Soviet Union and its satellites, at least on paper, recognized the importance of basic Western values with regard to fundamental human rights and freedoms of the individual. Yet others treated it as a final political and moral recognition of the Soviet Union and the status quo that emerged after the end of the World War II.

Each of those interpretations might have elements of truth, because it is in the nature of the process that it consists of different stages and that different aspects have prevailed in the course of its development.

But having said this, what is the OSCE today? I would rather first say what it is not. I strongly believe that the OSCE is not about the balance of power. And nor should it be.

From the Helsinki Final Act through the Charter of Paris and the Charter for European Security signed at the Istanbul Summit, the OSCE has come a long way. However, it has never lost the key strength contained at its core, namely its principles and values. Indeed, the OSCE is about values and principles that all OSCE participating states recognize as being the foundation on which the relations between the states and the peoples belonging to the OSCE community should be based.

This means that we – all participating States – have undertaken a commitment to defend these values and observe these principles while organizing and developing our societies and building inter-state relations.

It also means that we are accountable to each other, that our performance, be it the functioning of our democratic institutions and internal political processes, or our behaviour in the international arena, are the subject of legitimate peer review by our fellow OSCE states.

We therefore all acknowledge that there is a set of objective standards – if you want, a higher reality – by which all our decisions and actions should be measured or judged. And this is precisely the essence of the OSCE.

But if principles and values are the essence, what about acting or making a difference? Yes, the OSCE is also about common decisions and action, but in this regard the OSCE – being a consensus-based Organization – is only

as strong as its lowest common denominator, or as some may say – its weakest link.

Nevertheless, when it comes to political dialogue among participating States, no matter how difficult it may be, the OSCE can never fail to show its strength and unique position in the European security architecture. It is important to emphasize the fact that the OSCE comprises 56 participating States, encompassing three continents – North America, Europe, and Asia – and more than a billion people. The OSCE brings together nations with different cultural traditions and political ambitions, varying social and economic backgrounds, and sometimes painful historical memories. Nonetheless, the fact is that they were able to make a joint commitment in favour of shared values and principles. This is not a minor achievement – it is something we believe should be cherished, preserved, and further strengthened.

Democratic freedoms, human rights, the peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, the political independence of states – these are the values and principles for which the OSCE stands. These are the principles that are essential for preservation of peace, security, and the freedom of nations and individuals.

Above all, the concept of comprehensive security is at the core of OSCE. It underpins all the activities of this Organization in its three dimensions – the politico-military, the economic and environmental, and the human. The OSCE concept of comprehensive security and its cross-dimensional approach are indispensable assets, and are valued as such by my country.

Security Challenges and the Role of the OSCE

Today we are trying to reflect upon challenges to European security, and to devise ways to tackle them jointly, including through the OSCE.

In doing this, we cannot afford to be complacent; there are serious security challenges in the OSCE area.

In the first OSCE dimension, encompassing politico-military issues, the most visible problems have to do with ongoing protracted conflicts, and with unfortunate developments in the field of arms control.

The tragic events of the last year, when some fundamental principles of the Organization were flagrantly violated, speak for themselves. The war in Georgia has shown once again that protracted conflicts pose a great danger to the security and stability of the OSCE area. It has shown how quickly a situation that had long been perceived as “frozen” can become dangerously “unfrozen”. The most negative consequence of the military conflict in Georgia is human suffering: It produced thousands of internally displaced persons as well as grave humanitarian problems that are very difficult to tackle immediately. However, a no less important consequence is that this conflict greatly contributed to the lack of trust that continues to be an issue among the

OSCE participating States. We see how difficult it is to restore lost confidence, especially when one participating State obviously lacks the political will to adhere to the OSCE's principles and commitments by making constructive moves that eventually could help rectify the injustice done.

The problems in the field of arms control were caused by the decision of the Russian Federation to suspend the implementation of the CFE Treaty. The CFE serves as a cornerstone of European security and had helped to ensure a peaceful transformation in Europe after the end of the Cold War. Lithuania stands ready to support all constructive efforts aimed at the preservation and further strengthening of this valuable instrument of security and confidence in Europe. Even as a non party to the CFE treaty, my country, being a NATO member, has been and will continue to be involved in the future discussions on arms control and CSBMs as they evolve.

The second OSCE dimension – dealing with economic and environmental aspects of security – has a major confidence-building potential. We believe that more active engagement in the resolution of the protracted conflicts in Georgia, Moldova, and Nagorno-Karabakh could bring positive results. The OSCE is already involved in water resources management and radioactive waste-disposal activities in Central Asia. There are further possibilities for more result-oriented initiatives.

Lithuania believes that the matter of energy security could receive more prominence on the OSCE agenda. We also support discussions of the security implications of climate change as well as potential security threats stemming from the financial and economic crisis in the OSCE area.

Lithuania attaches particular importance to the OSCE human dimension. Democratization, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and elections are the objects of the core commitments that all OSCE participating states have undertaken in this dimension. The *acquis* of this dimension should be consistently preserved and actively promoted in the whole OSCE area. However, full implementation of human rights commitments remains a constant challenge. Some negative trends, such as increasing violence against journalists, call for resolute action on the part of our Organization.

I would also like to stress the importance of the OSCE field operations and institutions. They have a special value to the OSCE, as they help countries in transition to become functioning, stable, and secure democracies. In this context, we were dismayed and disappointed by the Russian Federation's blocking of the consensus on a status-neutral proposal to retain the OSCE presence in Georgia. We believe that we all need more, not less of the OCSE in South Caucasus.

The current discussions on the future of security in Europe have been promoted by Russia. Starting from June 2008, Russia has repeatedly claimed that the security situation in Europe and the whole Euro-Atlantic area is deteriorating and that, in order to improve it, there is a need to revisit the whole European security architecture by creating a new legally binding European Security Treaty.

We were and remain unconvinced by these ideas as, *first*, they distrust the existing security architecture. *Second*, we are concerned that this initiative seems to reject the main OSCE principles and remains extremely vague and evasive with regard to our common values and the implementation of commitments undertaken. Therefore, we need first to dispel all doubts as to the real intentions behind these proposals before we could start considering what contribution they might make towards strengthening our common security throughout the OSCE area.

Enhanced Euro-Atlantic security is in all our interests. For Lithuania, the transatlantic link, working closely with the US, is essential. Russia also has an important role to play. Lithuania remains open to discussions on Euro-Atlantic security with Russia, including on tackling new threats and challenges.

NATO, the European Union, the OSCE, and the Council of Europe proved to be the cornerstones of European security and stability for decades. Where we have concerns is in relation to the fact that not all commitments and obligations are being implemented by some participating States. Instead of trying to create artificial legally binding instruments or documents, wouldn't we be better off beginning by focusing our attention and efforts on improving the implementation of existing commitments?

The current security architecture (organizations, commitments, and principles) has served us well. As part of the Euro-Atlantic community, Lithuania is open to exploring ways to further strengthen and reinvigorate the existing structures. And in this context, the OSCE can serve as an effective forum for discussions of European security (in all three dimensions) with due focus on implementation of our commitments. Differing perceptions of security should not preclude the search for common solutions, if we remain committed to the shared OSCE values and principles.

Lithuania therefore welcomes the Corfu dialogue as designed by the Greek OSCE Chairmanship and will engage constructively. We hope the Corfu Process will help us restore confidence and trust. We very strongly believe that strengthening the existing OSCE *acquis* and further promoting the implementation of OSCE commitments should be a key focus of such discussions. In this context, crisis management – including early warning, conflict prevention and resolution, and post-conflict rehabilitation – should remain at the core of the OSCE's work together with the promotion of human rights

standards across the OSCE area. The resolution of protracted conflicts, in our view, should also remain a key priority.

At the same time, while trying to set concrete goals and objectives for this discussion, we should be aware of the objective limitations of our Organization, which arise from the consensus principle. We may need time if we decide to enter into open and candid dialogue, which we hope can be instrumental in reducing the current gap of trust that exists between some participating States.

Lithuania wants an inclusive, transparent, and open-ended discussion. The present Euro-Atlantic framework, including the Helsinki *acquis*, is central to our security. We should not prejudge the outcome of this debate, nor impose artificial timelines.

We look forward to contributing to the debate, as we believe that in order to respond to current security problems in OSCE area we need to:

- restore confidence and trust;
- improve implementation of commitments;
- resolve protracted conflicts;
- give new impetus to arms control (and regimes for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction);
- strengthen conflict-prevention and crisis-management efforts;
- reinvigorate promotion of the human dimension, including democracy and human rights;
- strengthen capacities to respond to new threats and challenges, (transnational threats) e.g. those arising from climate change, environmental degradation, scarcity of water, cyber-crime, piracy, etc;
- strengthen energy security in Europe.

Here the OSCE can play an extremely useful role, as it is the most suitable and indeed natural forum for such a discussion. The OSCE provides not only inclusiveness, transparency, and terms of reference, it is also a political and moral yard-stick by which such a discussion could be guided and measured.