

## Russia's OSCE Policy in the Context of Pan-European Developments

Russia's OSCE policy met with only little public interest in 1997. This is partly owing to widespread "OSCE surfeit" - which also exists in Russia itself - but also to the fact that it was mainly other developments that attracted the most attention. This applies in particular to the NATO Summit Meeting in Madrid in July 1997 where the decision was made to start negotiations with the first candidates for admission from Eastern Central Europe, and also to the signing in Paris on 27 May 1997 of the Founding Act<sup>1</sup> on the reorganization of relations between Russia and the North Atlantic Alliance. The conclusion of the conference of EU governments, too, dealt not only with the strengthening of the European Union, in particular the introduction of the European Currency Union according to plan, but also with the criteria and schedule for the EU's eastern enlargement, which increasingly is occupying centre stage in European policy. In view of the imminent entry into force of the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement, future relations between Russia and the EU are attracting more and more interest, both in Moscow and in Brussels. Thus it is not just the apparent widespread loss of interest in the daily work of the OSCE that keeps that organization from returning to the limelight of European security policy but also the growing pluralism of European institutions, the ever more complicated network of institutions with a pan-European reach, which is keeping the OSCE in the shadows of European policy.

At first glance it looks as though the OSCE were playing only a subordinate role in Russian policy on Europe as well. It is true that during the first half of 1997 the Russian side expended its greatest energy on settling relations with NATO, culminating in the signing of the Founding Act; but in all phases of the negotiations Moscow viewed this settlement consistently in relationship to the OSCE and to the pan-European perspective that the OSCE provides. This held true at the Russian-American summit in Helsinki in March 1997 and it applies likewise to the text of the Founding Act itself. It was also evident in the Russian proposals for a Charter on European Security<sup>2</sup> which were introduced on 17 July 1997 on the basis of the mandate of the Lisbon OSCE Summit of Decem-

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1 Cf. Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between the NATO and the Russian Federation, issued in Paris, France, on 27 May 1997, in: NATO review 4/1997, Documentation, pp. 7-10.

2 Cf. An Outline of the Charter on European Security, presented at the meeting of the Security Model Committee under the OSCE Permanent Council on July 17, 1997 in Vienna.

ber 1996.<sup>3</sup> The text of the "Concept for a Charter on European Security" makes Russia's interests and efforts in the OSCE framework perfectly clear and deals with three important points:

- the position of the OSCE within the overall network of European institutions;
- the activities of the organization in the field of conflict prevention and/or settlement;
- other fields of OSCE activity (*inter alia* military, economic and humanitarian aspects).

The three sections of the following article are intended to give an overview of Russian OSCE policy in relation to these fields.

### *The OSCE in the General Context of European Policy*

Since 1994 discussion of the future European security system has often created the impression that one goal of Russian OSCE policy was to place that organization's pan-European perspective in opposition to the eastward enlargement of Western organizations, especially NATO.<sup>4</sup> Russia's Concept for a Charter on European Security, too, was presented in such a way as to be in almost diametric opposition to the Atlantic Alliance's decision on eastward enlargement. Thus the Head of the Russian OSCE Mission, Ambassador Yuri Ushakov, pointed out in the meeting of the Security Model Committee that the draft represented Russia's commitment to the pan-European idea and its rejection of efforts to divide Europe yet again and to create artificial barriers.<sup>5</sup>

Russia's proposals on the European Security Model for the 21st Century, which were discussed in the OSCE in 1995 and 1996, are still clearly remembered.<sup>6</sup> Apart from a few general principles, Russia was not able to develop its approach in any substantial way but the general tendency was clear. The OSCE was to

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3 Lisbon Document 1996, reprinted in this volume, pp. 419-446, p. 429.

4 Cf. Andrej Zagorski, Rußland und die OSZE - Erwartungen und Enttäuschungen [Russia and the OSCE - Expectations and Disappointments], in: Institut für Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik an der Universität Hamburg [Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg]/IFSH (Ed.), OSZE-Jahrbuch [OSCE Yearbook] 1995, Baden-Baden 1995, pp. 109-119.

5 Cf. Vystuplenie postoyannogo predstavatelya Rossiiskoi Federatsii posla Yu. V. Ushakova na sasedanii Komiteta po modeli besopasnosti [Statement of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Yuri V. Ushakov, at the meeting of the Security Model Committee], 17 July 1997, p. 1.

6 Cf. Dieter S. Lutz/Andrej Zagorski, A Security Model for the 21st Century, in: "Arbitration Court" and "Security Model": Two Aspects of the OSCE Discussion, Hamburger Beiträge zur Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik [Hamburg Papers on Peace Research and Security Policy], Vol. 99, Hamburg 1996, pp. 7-27.

assume a central and co-ordinating role amongst the various European security institutions.

Somewhat different undertones can be heard in the most recent proposals. The "Concept" for the Charter on European Security does not aim to set up a hierarchical system of European security with the OSCE at its head. It sees its main task in promoting better co-operation between the various European institutions, *inter alia* through confidence-building, through the exchange of information and greater transparency in their activities, through improved co-operation, co-ordination and division of labour, and through concerted action. For example, annual meetings of the various organizations concerned with European security, co-ordinated by the OSCE, should be held to discuss concrete aspects of co-operation and co-ordination and reach appropriate understandings.<sup>7</sup> This proposal takes over a number of ideas contained in the EU countries' Platform for Co-operative Security. At the heart of the Russian proposal is the thought that the European security system should rest on a network of complementary and mutually reinforcing institutions without a leading role being assigned to any of them.<sup>8</sup>

Despite these external developments it should be pointed out that the core idea of the Russian proposals - obtaining better co-operation between the various European security organizations - continues to imply an outstanding position for the OSCE, although without expressly subordinating the other institutions to it. The press statements accompanying the Russian proposal signified clearly that the OSCE was viewed as the core element of a future European system and was to play a central role in ensuring security and stability. Commentaries in Russian scholarly journals state explicitly that the OSCE should be fitted out to guide European transformation processes. They also assign to it a prominent position as partner organization of the United Nations.<sup>9</sup>

It remains to note that the strengthening of the OSCE continues to occupy a central position in Russia's European policy, particularly in view of the growing tendency of western organizations to expand towards the east and despite the gradual institutionalization of Russia's relations with NATO and the European Union and despite the temporary focus on the problems that have arisen in connection with NATO's eastward enlargement. Still, it is no less important to point out that Russia, for all its continuing commitment to the OSCE, recognizes that organization's limits. These can be seen most clearly in an area which is currently one of the most important for the OSCE - conflict settlement. On the one hand, Russia stresses the primacy of the UN Security Council as a source of

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7 Cf. An Outline of the Charter on European Security, cited above (Note 2), p. 3.

8 Cf. Statement of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, cited above (Note 5), p. 3.

9 Cf. Yuri Rakhmaninov, OBSE v XXI veke: na puti k novoi modeli besopasnosti [The OSCE in the 21st Century: Under Way towards a New Security Model], in: SShA [USA] 1/1997, pp. 47-48.

legitimacy for all activities involving the maintenance and restoration of peace.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, Moscow wishes to protect the post-Soviet area as far as possible from direct interventions by the OSCE and, in accord with the subsidiarity principle, to give the most prominent role to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). This is one important reason for Russia's efforts to have the CIS recognized by the OSCE, a concern which was presented - unsuccessfully although repeatedly and in explicit terms - during the preparations for the Lisbon Summit.

#### *Conflict Settlement in the OSCE Framework*

There is general agreement in Russia that conflict settlement is one of the most important responsibilities of the OSCE. Even so, this problem is often viewed with mixed feelings. On the one hand, most of the OSCE's activities in regions of conflict *inter alia* in the former Soviet Union find acceptance. But Russia is also interested in having the OSCE's role in settling conflicts expanded beyond the borders of the former Soviet Union (and former Yugoslavia) to cover the rest of Europe. As a general matter, Russia, in connection with its proposals for the Charter on European Security, supports a codification of the procedures for the despatch and conduct of OSCE missions in various OSCE States.

The initial fears of contact and interference stemming from OSCE missions to regions of conflict within the former Soviet Union have, at least for the time being, lost much of their significance. Co-operation with the missions in the field has, with few exceptions, been positive. It has been particularly good with the OSCE Mission to Georgia, which concerns itself primarily with the settlement of the conflict in South Ossetia but to some extent also with the one in Abkhazia. The role of the OSCE Mission to the Trans-Dniester region (Moldova) too is generally viewed positively. The interference with the Mission's work, which has occurred with some regularity, has mainly been owing to inadequate co-operation on the part of the authorities in the Trans-Dniester region. Especially since Russia, France and the United States were appointed as co-chairmen of the Minsk Group in 1997, co-ordination of efforts to settle the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) has improved. Even the occasionally controversial activities of the OSCE Assistance Group to Chechnya ultimately found widespread acceptance in Moscow. The deployment of the OSCE in Estonia and Latvia - through its Missions and through the activities of the High Commissioner on National Minorities - has also been approved by official circles in Moscow. Such concerns as exist stem mainly from the fear that the two Baltic countries might be successful in their desire to have the OSCE activities on behalf of national minorities there declared superfluous.

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10 Cf. An Outline of the Charter on European Security, cited above (Note 2), p. 4.

Most of the criticism is aimed at the activities of the OSCE Mission to Ukraine which, as Russian politicians and diplomats see it, has focused exclusively on developments in Crimea and paid too little attention to problems related to the rights of minorities in Ukraine as a whole. This involves, among other things, the decline of teaching in the Russian language and access to foreign mass media. Owing to the sensitivity of these matters in Russian-Ukrainian relations, however, Russia has hesitated to put pressure on the Mission to fulfil these tasks. Russia views the OSCE's current efforts at conflict settlement as problematic mainly because of the application of a double standard. The Organization's activities are concentrated exclusively on the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia and exclude a comparable involvement in Western Europe - in Northern Ireland, for example, or in connection with the border-crossing minority problems in Turkish Kurdistan.

In order to strengthen the OSCE's role in conflict settlement in the whole OSCE area, Russia's proposals call for a codification of rules and procedures for the despatch of OSCE missions. Using past experience as a basis, the objective is *inter alia* to

- put together a list of responsibilities to be assigned to OSCE missions;
- agree on rules of procedure for establishing the mandate and for carrying out and ending missions;
- formulate basic principles for peacekeeping activities of the missions;
- provide the OSCE with the necessary means for carrying out its own peacekeeping operations by, among other things, putting military, police and civilian stand-by personnel at its disposal and setting up a small staff which would report to the Permanent Council and the Secretariat in Vienna;
- establish operational rules for planning and carrying out OSCE peacekeeping operations;
- agree on terms for producing appropriate memoranda concerning co-operation between the OSCE and the concerned countries.

#### *Other Areas*

Russia's most recent proposals also deal with co-operation in the fields of arms control<sup>11</sup> as well as of human and minority rights. Special emphasis is given to the economic dimension of the OSCE, which Russia views as underdeveloped.

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11 On the adaptation of the CFE Treaty see the article by Zellner/Dunay in the present volume.

Russia has also worked out ideas of its own on problems, currently under discussion, related to non-compliance with OSCE commitments.

There is little that is new in the Russian position on *politico-military matters*. Emphasis is given to the complex "Framework for Arms Control" that was adopted in Lisbon and to developing the agenda of the Forum for Security Cooperation.<sup>12</sup> In addition to adapting existing arms control agreements new ones should be worked out to deal with those areas and weapons categories that have hitherto been left out of the agreements. New confidence-building measures should be drawn up as well. In this connection, reference is made to the classic Russian proposals for including the activities of the naval forces in the confidence-building measures.

The proposals in the field of the *human dimension* of the OSCE contain a number of specific points prompted by Russia's special concerns in its relations with neighbouring countries. Thus, in addition to the need for improved implementation of OSCE commitments in the areas of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the proposals call for focusing on certain problem areas. Among them those identified are:

- continued human rights violations;
- manifestations of intolerance, aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism;
- the forced resettlement of portions of populations and illegal migration;
- the impermissibility of a policy that promotes statelessness; and
- threats against the independent mass media.

Moreover, the right of national minorities to retain their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identities should be better protected. The OSCE institutions responsible for these fields, among them the missions and the High Commissioner on National Minorities, should be used more energetically.

With regard to the *economic dimension*, which is one of the priorities of Russian OSCE policy, a number of objectives are being pursued. First, efforts aimed at the activation of the OSCE Economic Forum are not being abandoned. Its most recent meeting in Prague aroused hopes in Moscow that, over time, a pan-European forum based on private initiative which meets regularly, is made up of business people from the OSCE States and is provided with a small technical secretariat might come into being. Second, earlier proposals are being revived to give the OSCE a role in co-ordinating the support for economic transformation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe which is presently being provided by a whole series of international organizations. The OSCE ought to be given a special responsibility for developing new ideas and co-ordinating

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12 Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, OSCE Decisions 1996, Reference Manual, Vienna 1996, pp. 25-34.

economic rehabilitation measures for regions affected by conflict. The Russian position does not, to be sure, set up a direct and necessary relationship between the economic dimension and other areas of the OSCE's work but it does assume that progress in co-operation should be achieved in a comparable way in all areas.

Last but not least, Russian diplomats are presently examining the proposals of a number of Western countries for developing OSCE mechanisms to enforce compliance with commitments once undertaken (non-compliance debate). Moscow tends to be sceptical about these proposals, for two reasons: first, the OSCE already has a wealth of politically binding mechanisms, which also apply to individual areas, for promoting compliance with existing commitments; second, the OSCE ought not to let itself be forced into the role of a prosecutor but should continue to pursue on a broad scale its characteristic co-operative approach, if anything helping delinquent countries to observe their commitments.

### *Conclusions*

This overview of the main points of current Russian OSCE policy clearly shows some of its weaknesses which, however, under appropriate circumstances could be transformed into advantages. The focus on the Charter on European Security, particularly against the background of the continuing debate over the role of various institutions in a future European security system, implicitly fuels the "either OSCE or NATO" controversy - which in turn offers little hope for a constructive solution. Most of the other Russian initiatives have to do with issues that concern OSCE operations or which have only marginal importance for the current agenda of European policy. Some of these initiatives (especially the one concerning a co-ordinative role for the OSCE in support of transformation in the reform countries) have little prospect of success. All of these issues are important but they arouse little public enthusiasm in Europe - either in Russia or elsewhere. A thoroughgoing *routinization of the OSCE's activity* could turn out to be an ill service to the Organization.

Still, the most recent developments give us modest reasons for hope that after the hectic controversies of the past even "hot" questions of European policy like NATO's eastward enlargement and the settlement of relations between Russia and NATO can be treated more or less as a matter of routine. This would give the OSCE more latitude for a less controversial and more objective discussion of current problems. For the OSCE, it would be an opportunity once again to make the best possible use of its specific co-operative approach.