

The New OSCE: From Words to Deeds

A Swedish View on the Past, the Present and the Future

The dramatic developments in Europe, particularly in the nineties, have profoundly affected the CSCE/OSCE as a whole as well as the role of the individual participating States - Sweden perhaps more than most. The following is an attempt to describe from a Swedish perspective some of the more important aspects of this radical change of the CSCE/OSCE which can simply be described as a distinct shift in balance away from norm-setting towards field operations. The introduction of the rotating chairmanship meant a lot to the effectiveness of the Organization. The Swedish chairmanship in 1993 is inextricably linked with the development of a partially new body with a new status as an organization equipped with new tools and charged with new missions.

When looking back, one can clearly see that certain innovations have become quite useful additions to our arsenal of conflict prevention instruments, the most obvious ones being the dozen or so field missions that have been established from Estonia to Macedonia and from Belarus to Tajikistan covering large parts of the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia. The total number of mission members has actually increased tenfold in a couple of years and now amounts to some 600.¹ Most missions are quite small, but two of them, Bosnia and Croatia, are sizeable and have complex mandates, thus presenting the Organization with new political and managerial challenges.

Launching and running missions today take up a sizeable portion of the CiO's (Chairman-in-Office) and Secretariat's time as well as the better part of the deliberations in the Permanent Council where discussion and decisions are often initiated by the regular reports of the Heads of Mission. The mandates of the missions differ according to local circumstances, but are nearly always multifunctional and thus adapted to the new generation of security problems.

Another very useful instrument which saw the light of day during the Swedish chairmanship is the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM). His task is not to act as an ombudsman on behalf of those groups but rather to dampen controversies in this regard so that they do not develop into conflicts. The HCNM would bring up citizenship and minority rights, minority languages, return of exiles etc. Currently the HCNM is active in such diverse

¹ The Mission in Kosovo (KVM) is now adding another 2,000 (as of February 1999).

environments as Albania, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Croatia, Latvia, Macedonia, Slovakia, the Ukraine and Hungary.

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Warsaw is presently in a very interesting phase, moving gradually away from a too heavy emphasis on seminars and abstract thinking towards a much more practical stance in the field. The observation of elections as well as the build up of national competence is a real growth sector! In recent years thousands of observers from participating States have been engaged in elections in the new democracies. During 1997 alone a couple of hundred Swedes acted as election monitors.

Also important with regard to adapting work on the human dimension to changing circumstances is the decision in Copenhagen to modernize the so-called implementation meetings, making them shorter, more focused and also strengthening the link between Vienna and Warsaw in the human dimension field.

The Ministerial in Copenhagen in December 1997 also appointed a new Representative on Freedom of the Media. He will, in close co-operation with the CiO, support compliance with OSCE principles and commitments in the field of freedom of expression and free media. 1998 will be the year for this new institution to start proving its usefulness as another instrument in the OSCE orchestra.

This by no means exhaustive list clearly shows that the OSCE has managed to develop in a flexible manner into an effective tool for conflict prevention in the post-Cold War security environment. If one adds to this the strong leadership of the CiO and the very limited budget one can clearly see that participating States get a lot of "bang for the buck" if that expression can be applied in the area of soft security. As an illustration one can mention that the OSCE Secretariat is one tenth the size of that of the Council of Europe. And the total turn-over of the Organization is still less than 120 million US-Dollars, with the two Missions to Bosnia and to Croatia accounting for two thirds.²

Nevertheless, as in any rapidly expanding organization faced with big challenges, there is also room for critical analysis and reflection with regard to future work. In a sense the OSCE is a victim of its own success. Problems are both of an organizational/structural and a conceptual nature and the two are obviously linked.

Conceptually, some participating States still refuse to accept the transformation of OSCE from a diplomatic conference to an organization, one result being parsimoniousness with funding and reluctance to reform structures, while at the same time entrusting the OSCE with bold and demanding new tasks. Secondly, the OSCE shares the predicament of the international com-

2 The KVM will approximately double that figure.

munity as a whole of having put the emphasis on the middle and latter parts of the conflict cycle, i.e. conflict management and post-conflict rehabilitation. Efforts with regard to early warning and especially early action leave a lot to be desired. Finally we have not always succeeded in making conflict resolution truly multi-dimensional so as to link military, political, human dimension, economic and social factors etc. to reflect our broad definition of security.

Structural/organizational problems are both internal and external. Internally the core issue is the relationship between the CiO and the Secretary General. The participating States decided early on that they wanted strong political leadership from the CiO whereas the Secretariat would be given a supportive role only, thus making the OSCE unique among security organizations. Today no participating State seriously questions this general principle but the precise interpretation of the division of labour may have to be adjusted, especially with regard to the management of large scale missions. It can also be argued that long-term continuity cannot be assured by the three Troika members alone. Finally, one can see the need for a stronger supporting role for the Secretariat in the future if one of the less experienced new democracies of Eastern Europe were to assume the chairmanship.

Linked to this is the role of participating States, their delegations in Vienna and the representative bodies like the Permanent Council (PC), the Senior Council, the Ministerial etc. Quite clearly the PC has become much more of a decision-making body and less of a forum for discussion. The future role of the Senior Council is also unclear after the introduction of the so-called "reinforced PC". Many of the new participating States complain, that their influence is increasingly being marginalized. In reality, they say, the USA, EU and Russia dominate.

Some would also claim that there is a more multi-faceted democratic deficit in the Organization. The Parliamentary Assembly, for example, seems to have little or nothing to do with work within the Organization. Also in many areas there is little effective contact with NGOs.

When looking at the Secretariat in more detail one can clearly see that certain functions have been added organically and rather haphazardly in order to deal with the new challenges. The time is ripe to deal with the structure in a more organized way following a decision at the Copenhagen Ministerial on the "operational capabilities of the Secretariat". Hopefully, decisions taken during the autumn of 1998 could be implemented by mid 1999. Another internal problem is the geographical diaspora of the Organization. It is probably of no great consequence that a small Secretariat remains in Prague or that the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly is located in Copenhagen. More serious in a long-term perspective is the location of such an important function as ODIHR in Warsaw. In addition, there is now a discussion on lo-

cating the office of the HCNM permanently in The Hague. Both the work of the ODIHR and the HCNM are closely linked to the long-term missions and other activities run by the Secretariat in Vienna.

Externally the greatest challenge is to find the proper role of the OSCE in the European security structure in general and in the practical co-operation with other organizations in the field more specifically. The comparative advantages of the OSCE are clearly in the areas of early warning and action, non-military crisis management and the restoration of democracy and civil society after a conflict. Although there is no reason to formally exclude the option of peacekeeping it is hard to see the usefulness of establishing a military capability within the Organization to lead and conduct such operations. Military observers and civilian police may of course be an entirely different matter. Furthermore there may well be situations where the OSCE could mandate others to undertake a peacekeeping task.³

Also in the field of co-operation with other organizations the Copenhagen Ministerial laid the foundation for further steps by approving the so-called Common Concept⁴ paper. The experience gained in recent years would seem to indicate that depending on circumstances the OSCE could co-operate with almost any other organization either in a co-ordinating or in a complementary role. However, given the rapid expansion in the field of human dimension there would be particular advantages in developing closer and perhaps more institutionalized contacts with the Council of Europe.

For Sweden the end of the Cold War and our membership of the EU since 1995 have meant that we have lost the prominent and highly visible position as a member of the group of Neutral and Non-aligned Countries. Today EU delegations co-ordinate closely and frequently in Vienna within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The co-operation seems to have been carried further in Vienna than elsewhere and is also reflected in the fact that the Presidency speaks for the entire Union in the Permanent Council. The only exception to this co-operation concerns arms control and related matters. All this means that Sweden has had to intensify its efforts to have maximum influence on the EU position.

In the introduction it was made clear that the OSCE is becoming a much more operational organization. Almost everything that has been said so far proves that point. However, the normative work goes on. The most fundamental challenge is of course the decision by ministers in Copenhagen to set guidelines for a new Document-Charter. The reasoning behind this is that the

3 In a sense the KVM represents a new type of crisis management that could well be described as "civilian peacekeeping".

4 Sixth Meeting of the Ministerial Council, 18-19 December 1997 (in Copenhagen), reprinted in this volume, pp. 431-457, here: Decision No. 5, Guidelines on an OSCE Document-Charter on European Security, Annex I, Common Concept for the Development of Co-operation between Mutually-Reinforcing Institutions, pp. 449-451.

most recent additions to the "*acquis*", the Paris Charter and the 1992 Helsinki Document, were made at a time when European security structures were still in a state of flux. Subsequent changes would merit additions also to the *acquis* in the form of a new Charter. There is a great deal of logic in this argument provided that it is not used to weaken the standards set and the commitments made in the Helsinki Final Act and in the above mentioned documents. The discussion leading up to Copenhagen illustrates the need for vigilance in this regard. The new Charter should be adopted "at the level of Heads of State or Government of the OSCE participating States",⁵ i.e. at Summit level, which has meant that the timing and location of the next Summit have become directly linked to the Charter negotiations.⁶

The ultimate aim of the military dimension of the CSCE during the Cold War was to prevent war from breaking out "by mistake" or due to unwarranted suspicion. Concepts like confidence- and security-building measures, transparency, predictability and security dialogue were the means to achieve this. Today, much of this feels out of date, irrelevant and not applicable to a security situation characterized more by crises than by conflicts. Furthermore an entirely new climate of co-operation is developing among the professional military in Europe. In recent years more efforts have therefore been put into such matters as the designing of a Code of Conduct as well as the search for sub-regional solutions when applicable, for instance in the Balkans. The picture is further complicated by the fact that most conflicts today are of an intra-state character or have an intra-state dimension. All this has to be taken into account in the present work to revise the Vienna Document (VD 94). However, the new document must also retain its traditional role.

In this area Sweden shares the interest of other participating States, but our policy of military non-alignment as well as our geostrategic situation may sometimes give us a slightly different perspective. A given interest is the need for continued stability. When building on a new European security structure we have to safeguard certain fundamentals in the *acquis* where transparency, contacts and dialogue are corner-stones. Security must remain indivisible. The broad security concept, unique for the OSCE, has both a geographical and a functional dimension. We steadfastly oppose any limitations on the freedom of countries to choose their own security arrangements.

5 Ibid., p. 448.

6 It has been since agreed that the Summit will take place in Istanbul, 18-19 November 1999.

Conclusions

The work of the OSCE has expanded dramatically in recent years in the new operational direction described above. Given the very limited resources, the flexible non-bureaucratic set up conceived in the early nineties has responded remarkably well to the new challenges. A number of new tools and instruments have come to the fore. The OSCE has become a very useful, and widely used, instrument for common security in Europe and adjacent areas. The CSCE once stood for military stability and political revolution. The OSCE today is rapidly becoming a tool for contributing to political stability. Its comparative advantages in the area of non-military crisis management are becoming increasingly clear. Its Achilles' heel, which it shares with the rest of the international community, is the tardiness in engaging in early action to prevent conflicts from developing. The rapid and somewhat organic way this expansion has occurred has also meant that there is now a need for consolidation rather than extending into new fields and developing new instruments. There is also a need to continuously address the potential conflict between the effectiveness of the Organization and its democratic legitimacy. This problem has got different dimensions, as has already been discussed. They range from the consensus principle as applied to decisions, the limited role of parliamentarians and NGOs, to the relationship between the CiO and the Secretariat.

The OSCE must also find its place in the overall European security structure. While no definite answers can be given today, the need for closer co-operation between the various security organizations is becoming increasingly clear, in particular through experience gained in the field. Work has already been set in motion with regard to organizations such as the UN, EU, the Council of Europe, NATO/EAPC, WEU as well as the link between the OSCE and sub-regional organizations.

On the long-term and normative side there must now be some profound reflection. In the end any organization becomes what member states want it to be. Here there is a clear lack of a common vision. Some seem not to have given up the idea of the OSCE as the great umbrella security organization. At the other extreme there are those who only see the OSCE as a useful manager of missions that no other organizations wish to handle. This span of visions on the future of the Organization will make it very difficult to arrive at the Security Charter that is to be adopted at Summit level.

From a Swedish point of view it seems clear that the operational and normative work of the OSCE should mutually reinforce one another in a virtuous circle rather than being separate tracks. Equally important is that the fundamental *acquis* of Helsinki and Paris is not eroded in the process.