

## Crisis Prevention in Europe and the Strengthening of the OSCE

### *Lessons from the Kosovo Conflict for Crisis Prevention in Europe*

Historians may think it premature to draw conclusions at this early stage from the Kosovo conflict. They will rightly point to the fact that we still lack much information needed for a full understanding of the dynamics of this conflict. But politicians must act and there is particularly great pressure to do so in South-eastern Europe if a new outburst of war and violence is to be prevented. And thus I am making the effort to examine the conclusions to be drawn from the Kosovo conflict for crisis prevention in Europe, although I am aware that the answers can only be incomplete and provisional in nature.

In a number of respects the Kosovo conflict represents a decisive point in post-Cold War European policy. For the first time NATO, and as a part of it the *Bundeswehr*, have carried out a combat mission outside of Alliance territory without a mandate from the United Nations. The military intervention of the Alliance in the Kosovo conflict signifies, at the same time, the failure of civil-political crisis prevention. This is the case although numerous early-warning signs have been apparent for over a decade. Anyone seeking to learn lessons for European crisis prevention must first look into the causes of this failure. The containment strategy of the international community with respect to the post-Yugoslav crisis area has also failed once and for all. It was a mistake to think that the crisis spot could be cordoned off and then controlled from the outside allowing the international community to avoid substantial involvement - especially of a financial kind. Finally, the military intervention of NATO in Kosovo triggered what has probably been the most serious crisis in relations with Russia to date. And even though it proved possible - mainly through German initiative - to overcome this crisis and include Russia in a common strategy, it would be irresponsible to trivialize the differences between the Western Alliance and Russia after the fact.

The Kosovo conflict laid bare in ruthless fashion the weaknesses and limits of the European Union's ability - or, better, that of its member States - to achieve consensus and to act. It simply cannot be denied that the EU, without the leadership of the United States, is not (yet) in a position to practise pre-scient crisis prevention and effective crisis management, even in its own immediate neighbourhood. Taken together, these developments have led to a decisive point at which we can scarcely say "let us continue" down this path. The need for political change can be seen at many levels - in the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU, in the Transatlantic relationship, in the military dimension. In this paper I shall limit myself to drawing a number

of conclusions from the Kosovo conflict for crisis prevention in Europe and the activities of the OSCE.

### *Containment Is not a Fitting Instrument for Crisis Regulation*

Containment policy means an effort to encapsulate a conflict, to cordon it off and push it to the side in the hope that it will at some point solve itself. Containment policy means keeping oneself out of a conflict as far as possible or keeping one's involvement in it as limited and indirect as possible. Containment is value-neutral in a negative way and therefore has no relationship to jointly held OSCE principles. Containment policy is motivated by the narrow self-interest in avoiding those short-term costs that arise from intervention, in whatever form. For almost a decade, containment was the dominant strategy of the international community vis-à-vis the post-Yugoslavia crisis region. It must have become clear, at the latest as a result of the Kosovo conflict, that this strategy was a tragic mistake that has cost many thousands of human lives as well as an enormous amount of money. Even the narrow-minded selfish idea we could save money in the short term was deceptive. Now we are going to have to pay substantially more and over a long period of time. Incidentally, members of the Greens Parliamentary group in the German Parliament warned against a containment strategy back at the beginning of the nineties, demanding instead that the successor states to Yugoslavia be given a positive European development prospective - in other words, precisely what is provided for now in the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

The alternative to containment has been labelled intervention, although this says nothing about the character of the intervention. The legitimization of political-preventive intervention can be found in those OSCE norms which state that gross and continued violations of human and minority rights are not exclusively an "internal affair" of the country where they are committed. They are a matter of the legitimate interest all participating States have in stability and security. By making this almost revolutionary connection between the human and security dimensions, the CSCE/OSCE has created a new normative basis for peaceful and civil intervention which over the long term will have an important influence on the development of international law. At the same time, this fundamental innovation - which today still belongs to the field of "soft law" which is only politically binding under international law - reflects a state of affairs that can hardly be denied - that observance of basic human and minority rights in an age of explosively expanding trans-national ties can no longer be regarded as the exclusive domain of national sovereignty. We can even go a step farther and say that a strategy of intervention is today quite simply indispensable for the maintenance of both internal stability and stability in relations between states. Thus the question is no longer *whether* intervention is legitimate but *which strategies* of intervention, based

on common values of co-operative security, are likely to be the most effective on a lasting basis.

And it is exactly at this juncture that the failure of the international community in the face of the post-Yugoslavia conflict can be found: because we could not see our way clear to issuing an unambiguous invitation to the Yugoslav successor states to join Europe - which would undoubtedly have changed the motives and calculations of the political actors there in fundamental ways - we were forced a decade later, at a much higher level of escalation and in the face of significantly greater risks, to resort to the use of military force. From the start the failure of the international community, especially the European Union, to prevent the post-Yugoslavia conflict lay in its determination to follow a containment strategy. From this we can now draw the general conclusion that containment is not a suitable means of crisis prevention.

*Stability and Security Are a Function of the Combined Efforts of all Dimensions of the OSCE*

The importance of the human dimension in maintaining peace and stability is today generally recognized by all; a number of preventive instruments build on this connection. Regrettably, the same cannot (yet) be said of the economic dimension. The Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe of 10 June 1999<sup>1</sup> for the first time made it absolutely clear that the economic dimension is of central importance for crisis prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation. Unhappily this point was not understood until a long and bloody conflict had run its course, and we have not yet eliminated the danger that it will only be applied to post-conflict rehabilitation in a specific case and not to crisis prevention generally or to other regions. The economic dimension has been inadequately integrated into the preventive instruments developed earlier, both within OSCE institutions and in the relationship between the OSCE and the European Union. And yet it has always been clear that the key motive underlying EU expansion was not just to promote economic prosperity but in the extension of the European stability zone to the East and South-east for preventive purposes. To be sure, the European Union can only admit countries which already enjoy a fair measure of stability. That is why the prospect of admission can only be effective in preventing crises if the country in question has a real chance. But we have so far been negligent about including the economic dimension in preventive strategies for countries whose chances of admission are non-existent, negligible or distant. The first and most immediate lesson to be learned from the Kosovo conflict is to implement the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe with great determination and, in doing so, to include all countries of the region to a significant degree. Second, the re-

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lated lesson - that without effective integration of the economic dimension there can be little or no effective crisis prevention - must be applied to prevention strategy generally. This calls for the development of new forms of institutional co-operation and division of labour, both within the OSCE and between the OSCE and the EU.

*Military Crisis-Intervention and Civil Prevention Cannot Be Combined at Will*

In a superficial view, civil prevention failed in the Kosovo conflict while military intervention led to success. However, nothing could be more wrong than to draw from this the uninspired conclusion that we ought now to rely mainly on military means. For one thing there was never any consistent crisis-prevention effort in Kosovo appropriate to the magnitude of the threat. For another, military interventions are always more expensive and entail greater losses than civil ones and - what is equally important - they put the chances for future crisis prevention at risk. Thus the military actions of the Western Alliance, first alone and now together with Russia on the basis of a UN resolution, did lead to success, but only against the background of the spectacular failure that had occurred before. Military action alone cannot secure this success, nor will it ever be able to do so. It was only the political re-inclusion of Russia, which came about largely as a result of German pressure, that led to a UN resolution and thus to a clear mandate. If this had not worked, the latitude for political prevention in future crises would have been drastically reduced.

The Kosovo conflict provides a good opportunity to analyse the interaction within the power triangle constituted by the EU, the United States and Russia, on whose ability to co-operate stability and security in the OSCE area largely depend. The weaknesses of the European Union in achieving a consensus and finding the will to act became especially clear because, in contrast to earlier situations, action was really taken. These weaknesses are not primarily related to military capacity but, rather, to the ability to build a political consensus - the willingness to go beyond traditional "national" interests and define a European position. Until this can be done the European Union will always act too late, not at all, or only on the initiative of others. The Kosovo conflict demonstrated that crisis management in Europe, even in a region adjacent to the European Union, is today not possible without the leadership of the United States. Nor do I intend this statement to refer primarily to the undoubted military superiority of the United States but to the ability to lead in a political sense. This may strike some Europeans as a bitter truth, but it is the consequence of their own inadequacy. The experience garnered from the Kosovo conflict ought to be an occasion for the EU and its member States at least gradually to rethink their "national" prerogatives in foreign policy. I put

the word "national" in quotes here because in my view the rational definition of a foreign policy interest, to an ever greater extent, can only have a European orientation. The objective is to strengthen the European Union's ability to act on foreign policy matters, especially with regard to the preventive stabilization of the territory surrounding it, both near and far. The objective is not to do this without the United States of America, whose co-operation and involvement in European policy we continue to view as desirable. However, the relationship between the EU and the United States must be continuously developed and kept in balance to ensure that changing interests and capabilities are appropriately attuned to one another.

The fact that Russia belongs to Europe should not be limited to the province of solemn declarations but must prove itself, especially in those situations or crises in which the EU and NATO, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other, have different initial positions. In order to bring Russia into the common effort to solve the Kosovo conflict, it was necessary not only to overcome differences of position but also a crisis of confidence that had emerged from differing approaches. The German government and Foreign Minister Fischer, in particular, made a vital contribution to overcoming this difficulty. If it had not been possible once again to find a common course with Russia, the military success in Kosovo would in the long term have been surrounded by political uncertainties. At that time and under the prevailing circumstances there was no alternative to NATO's actions in the Kosovo conflict. Alternative approaches to a solution would have had to be started at a much earlier time. Nevertheless - or, better, precisely for that reason - military action of the kind taken in Kosovo offers no model for the future but, rather, represents an exceptional case which ought not to be repeated. This is particularly true considering that future crisis spots in the OSCE area could well be in CIS territory where a military intervention by NATO would in any case be out of the question.

*If We Want to Avoid Military Crisis Intervention We Have to Practise Political Prevention on Time*

With the conclusion of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, a large number of European countries and international organizations have made a solemn promise to combine post-conflict rehabilitation in Kosovo with long-term crisis prevention for all of South-eastern Europe. The first donor conference in Sarajevo in July 1999 was a hopeful initial sign that this time words will be followed by deeds - i.e. financial resources. This undertaking constitutes a political innovation in the field of conflict management both with regard to its financial magnitude and the complexity of the task of co-ordinating a large number of extremely varied political actors. To an important degree the long-term prospects of European crisis prevention depend on it. By

assigning Bodo Hombach as Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact, Germany has assumed central responsibility for the project.

The success of the Stability Pact will depend largely on whether the individual actors succeed, for and between themselves in their interaction, in designing and carrying out a co-ordinated strategy that includes all countries of the region. The Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE in 1999, the Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vollebæk, has given the Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ambassador Robert L. Barry, the job of working out a common strategy for the OSCE Missions active in South-eastern Europe. This kind of strategy has hitherto existed only in the embryonic stages and its future implementation will present new challenges both to the Chairman-in-Office and the OSCE Secretariat. Other actors, whether countries or international organizations, will have to ask themselves self-critically whether and to what extent they have an integrated strategy for the entire region.

Notwithstanding the vital role of the Stability Pact, we cannot lose sight of other, more distant regions or the general development of our preventive instruments. There are a number of EU programmes devoted to problems of prevention, some of them limited to candidates for admission, others going beyond that group. Under the future "Mr. CFSP", the former NATO Secretary General Javier Solana, the EU plans to establish its own early-warning and strategy-planning unit. The Council of Europe also carries out many different preventive tasks. All of these activities call for substantially more effective co-ordination - and not just at the leadership level but in day-to-day work on the local scene. Here, too, the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, which pulls together a large number of different actors in a joint effort, could turn out to be an important learning experience. Co-ordination alone will not be sufficient for the long term; farther-reaching and more creative solutions are called for. Why, for example, couldn't certain international organizations work out a regional or functional division of labour that might even lead to their giving up some of their past activities? Or why might it not be possible for activities that in the past have been pursued on a parallel basis to be handed over to a joint "subsidiary enterprise" rather than simply "co-ordinated" in a non-committal way?

What applies to the relationship between the different international actors also holds true for the internal relationship between various OSCE institutions. The OSCE was not designed on a drawing board but was the result of a series of institutionalization incentives that arose from very practical challenges. The decisions of the Helsinki Summit of 1992, for example, created a number of preventive instruments. These decisions were made under pressure from the conflict between Serbia and Croatia and the inability of the international community to come up with an appropriate response. This step-by-step development of OSCE structures led to the establishment of a number of OSCE institutions including the ODIHR, the missions and other field activi-

ties, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities, whose work is to be synchronized by a Chairmanship that rotates annually and a relatively weak Secretariat under the direction of the Secretary General. To clarify this with a few figures: in early 1999 the 5,459 people (including local workers) engaged in local, on-the-scene activities of the OSCE were matched by a Secretariat with a staff of just 230. Under these circumstances, anyone who favours stronger co-ordination of OSCE regional activities - and this affects not only South-eastern Europe but also the Central Asian and Caucasian areas - can hardly deny that the Secretariat needs to be better equipped, not only materially but also in terms of its organizational and political capabilities. This calls for a consensus of all participating States, including those that have in the past taken a sceptical view of strengthening the Secretariat and the Secretary General. But if the common goal of effective crisis prevention and post conflict rehabilitation is not to be put at risk, steps to strengthen the OSCE, both organizationally and politically, are indispensable.

#### *The OSCE Requires the Initiative of Its Participating States*

An organization with relatively weak structures and resources like the OSCE is particularly dependent on contributions from its participating States. This is true regarding the provision of qualified personnel and voluntary financial contributions as well as the level of political commitment and initiative that a country is prepared to invest in the organization. The two governing parties in Germany, in their coalition agreement of October 1998, emphasized repeatedly their determination to do more for conflict prevention generally and for the OSCE in particular. The facts show that the government has kept its word, even under the strict pressure to economize no government department can escape. Since 1 July 1999 the German Foreign Office has had a co-ordinator for the training of personnel for OSCE and UN civil peace missions. A pilot course, especially geared to the requirements for future members of the Kosovo Mission, was held in July 1999. In the year 2000 a 14-day course of this kind is to be held once a month for 20 participants. In the long term, this training concept, to whose development research institutes and non-governmental organizations have contributed, is to be given more varied content and opened up internationally. The objective is to build up a reserve pool of qualified personnel that can be drawn on in future preventive missions.

A prevention policy is not limited to training, as important as this aspect is. What is important for the longer term is to reshape the political decision-making process in such a way that early-warning signals are fed in at a very high level in the hierarchy. This requires specific steps to prepare for future

prevention missions, but these will only reach their full potential when we have achieved a higher level of awareness of the advantages of civil prevention over military crisis management. To create this awareness - and also in order to make specific and differentiated information available - we need research of a practical kind on prevention issues and on the activities of the OSCE. For that reason the German government welcomes the initiative to set up an OSCE research centre in Hamburg. It will help promote the kind of efforts under discussion here.

*In Today's Europe War Is not Inevitable Destiny*

War is a spectacular event, one which in a perverse sense is "made for the media". Crisis prevention is not in the same category. War and civil war exemplify a reactive pattern of engaging in conflict which has been practised for millennia and is still regarded as the *ultima ratio*. Prevention is something new which is based on a new set of values and calls for foresight and pro-active behaviour. This is more difficult than just reacting. Nevertheless, ten years of experience with a series of bloody conflicts following the end of East-West confrontation ought to be enough to enable us to take this hurdle. After all, no one denies the truism that prevention not only saves much human suffering but is quite simply cheaper and therefore represents a good investment from a purely economic standpoint. Moreover, it is well known where the potential sources of crisis in Europe lie. What we need to do - and this is the most important lesson from the Kosovo conflict - is to manage the leap from knowledge to preventive action.