

Marcel Peško

The Corfu Process – Opportunity to Establish a New Security Order in Europe or Recipe for Yet Another Failure?

Why Do We Need to Go Back to Basics?

The current discussion on a new security arrangement for the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space is generally dated to the speech given in Berlin by Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev in June 2008.¹ The then new Russian leader proposed that a European summit should take place to approve a mandate for talks on a legally binding European Security Treaty (EST). According to Medvedev, the main objective of such a document would be to guarantee the real reunification of Europe without dividing lines. However, Medvedev's initiative needs to be seen in a larger context, as it is yet another form of the same security concept that Russia has been pushing for years. Moscow's ambition is evidently to achieve more equality in the interaction of Russia, the EU, and the US in the new security environment. Its strategic objective is to minimize NATO's influence while legitimizing Russia's leading position in the post-Soviet area. An essential part of this strategy is to weaken the OSCE by circumventing its ability to act (by undertaking actions often referred to as "interference in internal affairs") in the context of protracted conflicts, to address human rights violations, and to deal with other shortcomings partly stemming from Russian behaviour both at home and in Russia's "near abroad".

In the early 1990s, Russia sincerely believed that the collapse of the Warsaw Pact would be followed by the break-up of NATO. According to Russia's vision, the OSCE was to become a fully fledged regional arrangement of collective security in the sense of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. Although many Western capitals flirted with this idea too, a substantive difference in perception of the future direction of the political discourse on security arrangements was obvious even then. Moscow was never able to abandon foreign-policy thinking based on concepts of military balance, mutual deterrence, collective security guarantees, buffer zones, spheres of interest, and non-interference in internal affairs, while, of course, always stressing the determining significance of "hard" security issues. Western politicians and

Note: The views contained in this contribution are the author's own and not the official position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic. The contribution reflects the state of affairs at the time of writing in July 2010.

- 1 Cf. President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev, *Speech at Meeting with German Political, Parliamentary and Civic Leaders*, Berlin, 5 June, 2008, at: http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/06/05/2203_type82912type82914type84779_202153.shtml.

experts, however, have always insisted upon the need to build up a genuine system of common, comprehensive, co-operative, and indivisible security based on compliance with agreed commitments and respect for fundamental values. Since Moscow allowed the comprehensive concept of security to be anchored in the OSCE's founding documents, it seemed at the start of the OSCE era that Russia, like many other states, really did wish to replace the Cold War attitude with a new outlook. But it soon turned out that things had been much more complicated. Twenty years later, the Russian political elites – and not only them – still have trouble reconciling themselves with the basic OSCE security concept and paying the necessary respect to OSCE commitments, particularly the human rights *acquis*. As a result of this attitude, a strategic mistrust has gradually taken hold at the heart of the OSCE. This is a consequence of the fact that the comprehensive and cross-dimensional fabric of the OSCE approach towards security – the concept of the responsibility of governments towards their citizens by means of respecting their fundamental rights and freedoms – has not found its stable place in the policies of Russia and its allies. Irrespective of their positive rhetoric, and regardless of the declarations they make, some European leaders still remain hostages to Cold War thinking, which is, of course, directly reflected in the lack of recognition for the OSCE's role as the primary tool for conflict prevention, conflict management, and conflict resolution through political dialogue and early action.

The OSCE should have become a symbol of modern security arrangements for the 21st century. Today, we have to admit that this dream has never come true. The Organization's main weakness was also its strength: Its efficacy as a forum for political consultations and united action was entirely dependent on the readiness of the participating States to comply with the agreed commitments and on their mutual trust, strengthened by the consensus principle. And it was precisely Russia and some of its allies from the post-Soviet space that gradually lost the political will to pursue the OSCE's unique security concept and to continue transforming their societies in line with OSCE values and commitments.

Due to contradictory perceptions of the security environment and its future on the part of Russia and its allies, on the one hand, and the West, on the other, mutual trust and common sense have gradually evaporated. This tendency was sped up by the arrival of the new national leadership in Russia, and by the dynamic growth of its economy. Developments that followed the 1999 Istanbul Summit clearly demonstrated that the level of Moscow's identification with the OSCE security concept is proportional to approval of democracy in Russia itself. The country has apparently chosen a civilizational model of its own. Even today, Russia's geopolitical perception of security is still limited to the politico-military dimension and characterized by a *zero-sum-game* policy, while the post-Soviet region is seen as natural sphere of influence, and Central Europe as a kind of no man's land where there is no room for potential threats to Russia's security. While NATO openly strives to

build up a strategic partnership with Russia, Russian security strategy still considers the Alliance to be a security threat. Hopefully this will soon change for the better.

The OSCE has become a mouthful that Moscow can no longer digest, but for different reasons. Although the CSCE/OSCE has always been primarily about the regulation of relations between the West and the (former) Soviet Union, it needs to be stressed that Russia's status within the Organization is the same as that of all the other 55 participating States. Therefore, Russia, like every other state, has been exposed to criticism regarding democratic shortcomings, such as non-transparent and biased elections and restrictions of human rights, including, in particular, the suppression of freedom of speech. Besides that, it must deal with OSCE activities in countries within its sphere of influence, and naturally not everything the OSCE does is in line with Moscow's interests. As Russia has failed to turn the OSCE into a kind of hub of European and transatlantic security organizations, it has begun to turn its back on the Organization. At the same time, it has started to call more loudly for a new security arrangement in Europe that would, in its opinion, finally rectify the fragmented security environment, in which the security of one group of countries, i.e. NATO members, has been strengthened at the expense of the security of others. In its criticism of the OSCE, Russia never forgets to mention that it was unable to prevent the bombing of the former Yugoslavia, the unilateral recognition of Kosovan independence, and the war in Georgia. Following the colour revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia, Russia's criticism turned into deliberate destruction, as typified by the address given by President Vladimir Putin before the February 2007 Munich conference. The then Russian president accused the West of efforts to destroy the balance between the three dimensions in favour of the human dimension of the OSCE and "to transform the OSCE into a vulgar instrument designed to promote the foreign policy interests of one or a group of countries".² This is, however, what Moscow will by all means try to prevent. The war in Georgia, which demonstrated a flagrant disregard of the Helsinki principles and of international law, only reconfirmed Moscow in its strategic decision to secure its interests in its near neighbourhood at any cost, regardless of the possible loss of international credit and the deterioration of relations with the West.

What Is Moscow Actually After?

In this context, Medvedev's initiative seems more like a reflection of continued Russian political thinking than a sincere effort to find responses to the

2 *Speech of the Russian President Vladimir Putin at the 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy*, 9-11 February 2007, Munich, 10 February 2007, at: http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2007/02/10/0138_type82912type82914type82917type84779_118123.shtml.

changes in the European security set up. A speech that President Medvedev held at the annual meeting of Russian ambassadors in July 2008, just a few days before the war in Georgia, disclosed where this thinking came from. The proposed European Security Treaty (EST) was an invitation to formalize and legitimize the new understanding of the Russian concept of security, which is based upon balance of forces and recognition of zones of privileged interest in the post-Soviet area.³

In November 2009, President Medvedev sent the text of the EST to his OSCE partners as well as to heads of other security organizations in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region. He once again proposed that a summit should be held to start negotiations on the new treaty. At that time, the response of the EU and NATO was not very enthusiastic. Although the Western partners generally welcomed the initiative as a manifestation of a desire to launch a dialogue on security in the OSCE area based on new foundations, they openly questioned whether a European security treaty was actually needed, and expressed their support for the continuation of dialogue on this issue within the OSCE Corfu Process.

In early December 2009, in parallel with this letter, the Russian foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov, sent a draft agreement on basic principles to modify relations between members of the NATO-Russia Council in the field of security⁴ to the NATO Secretary-General. The Alliance has not adopted any position on the proposal, but has informally let Moscow know that at this stage NATO was not prepared to hold discussions on it and considered the OSCE to be the central platform for the debate on the future of European security.

Although Russia claimed that its proposals were not designed to build an alternative system to the existing international security organizations, but rather to help stabilize relations in Europe, reading the texts more closely discloses that the former was precisely what Moscow was after. At the same time, Russia refused to discuss the EST in the context of the settlement of protracted conflicts, which it considers a completely separate issue. A demand voiced by the West that discussion of the EST should be held on the basis of the existing security architecture in Europe has also been rejected. Moscow's unclear and often antagonistic approach and the lack of will to tackle the frozen conflicts inevitably provoked questions about the sincerity of Russia's intentions. However, the West concluded that it should not be discouraged by this attitude, and that any opportunity to involve Russia, Belarus, and Central Asia in substantive dialogue should be utilized. At the same time, Western countries were not ready to compromise on the deterior-

3 Cf. *Speech by President Dmitry Medvedev at the Meeting with Russian Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives to International Organisations*, 15 July 2008, Russian Foreign Ministry, Moscow, at: http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2008/07/15/1121_type82912type84779_204155.shtml.

4 Cf. *Paper received from Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Lavrov*, NATO Unclassified SG(2009)0995, 4 December 2009.

ating situation in the field of human rights and democracy in those countries. All in all, the West has become more pragmatic in its attitude towards Russia and its partners while maintaining certain red lines. Nonetheless, the level of sensitivity regarding human rights violations has dropped over time. Thanks to this approach, the West has come up with the practical answer to the Russian initiatives: the launch of the Corfu Process within the OSCE as the catalyst for possible rapprochement.

The Corfu Process

Initially, the Russian proposals were met with open mistrust, as they were perceived as yet another diplomatic manoeuvre to prevent enlargement of NATO and the EU and to distract attention from Russia's military adventure in Georgia. However, the positions of most nations gradually began to soften. The war in Georgia and the gas crisis in Ukraine paradoxically sped up general acceptance of the assertion that security relations had gone in the wrong direction and that a new phase of dialogue had to be launched in order to restore trust, confidence, and common sense. After some hesitation, the West reached the conclusion that despite substantive reservations regarding Moscow's domestic and foreign policy, there was a need to keep Russia and its allies on board, to limit their tendency to self-isolation, and to objectively assess whether some of their proposals were not essentially rational. The initiative was taken by France, which held the EU Presidency in the second half of 2008. During the meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna on 17 July 2008, the French foreign minister, Bernard Kouchner, welcomed the proposal by the Russian president and recommended that the OSCE become a platform for its further elaboration.⁵ Two months after the war in Georgia, the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, emphasized that everything connected to security in Europe needed to be reassessed from every possible angle and that prejudices and stereotypes dating back to the Cold War era should be removed through dialogue and better comprehension of the thinking and needs of the other party. He also underscored that the discussion should take place within the OSCE, which is the only forum that includes all European security players on an equal basis. At the same time, the French president proposed that a special OSCE Summit take place to discuss the suggestions made by Russia and the EU regarding concepts for the development of European security.⁶ In early December 2008, NATO foreign ministers also expressed their support for commencing a dialogue on European security. The

5 Cf. *Statement by Mr. Bernard Kouchner, Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, to the OSCE Permanent Council*, PC.DEL.628/08 17 July 2008, p. 1, at: <http://www.osce.org/pc/32838>.

6 Cf. World Policy Conference, *Speech by Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy, President of France*, Evian, 8 October 2008, at: <http://www.ambafrance-uk.org/President-Sarkozy-s-World-policy.html>.

initiative was taken by the then OSCE Chairman-in Office, the Finnish minister of foreign affairs, Alexander Stubb, who hosted an informal lunch where the issue was discussed during the Helsinki Ministerial Council on 4 December 2008. The ministers welcomed the idea of a renewal of talks on European security. At the same time, they emphasized that, in view of the comprehensive nature of security, the discussion must be held within the OSCE, as only it can guarantee a balanced approach to all security dimensions. The prevailing view, strongly advocated by the EU and the US, has been that there was no sense in considering organizing an OSCE Summit before its substance was clearly defined and agreed upon. In 2009, the baton passed to the Greek Chairmanship, which threw itself into steering an informal discussion in the OSCE Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Co-operation in Vienna. The breakthrough was the informal meeting of ministers of foreign affairs held on 27-28 June 2009 on the Greek island of Corfu. This meeting brought about the transformation of the ad hoc discussion into a targeted and institutionalized dialogue. If some ministers had doubts about the practical benefits of such dialogue before Corfu, a consensus on its necessity and its gradual transformation into a more specific and permanent format gained overwhelming support there. The OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, the then Greek minister of foreign affairs, Dora Bakoyannis, officially announced the start of the Corfu Process, which was framed by the following principles:

- Dialogue will be anchored within the OSCE, though the contributions of other security institutions will also be taken into consideration.
- Dialogue will focus on the issues of crisis management, arms control and disarmament, and particularly on the CFE Treaty.
- There will also be discussion of new threats, including threats to environmental security and the reliability of energy supplies.
- Last but not least, there will also be discussion of how to strengthen compliance with human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

The declared objective of the Corfu Process was to renew trust among participating States, to establish mechanisms for better and more efficient implementation of existing commitments, and to create a platform to enable progress in solving new security challenges. In the autumn of 2009, the Greek Chairmanship organized ten rounds of discussions in Vienna at the level of Permanent Representatives to the OSCE, which were characterized by sincere and – in all but a few cases – non-confrontational dialogue. Despite the relaxed atmosphere and a high degree of creativity, however, the debate revealed a lack of trust and differing views on fundamental security challenges and the future security arrangements of the OSCE area.

The Corfu Process and the EU

Among other things, the Corfu Process has been a test for the EU and its new approach to the implementation of common foreign and security policy in the spirit of the Treaty of Lisbon. The Union was able gradually to elaborate a system of internal co-ordination on whose basis the Presidency, as a rule, delivered EU framework positions. These were followed by individual contributions from the member states, including their national proposals. The EU did not and does not wish to hold a dialogue based on a bloc-to-bloc approach. It regards the Corfu Process as a useful opportunity to overcome bloc thinking by means of creating ad hoc coalitions that include post-Soviet countries. So far, the EU has successfully dealt with this challenge. It has developed a clear strategy for conducting the debate (dialogue must focus on real, not virtual, threats and challenges; content, not form, is important; the present security architecture has served us well, but it needs to be reinforced and rendered more efficient; European security dialogue must be anchored within the OSCE; the dialogue must not take place in a vacuum; tangible progress is needed to solve the security issues our region faces, including renewal of the arms-control regime, disarmament, and positive developments regarding the so-called frozen conflicts; the dialogue must be open in character and should not prejudge any of the possible outcomes; the fundamental objective is *Helsinki plus*, not *Helsinki à la carte*), while simultaneously working out numerous concrete proposals and thus taking the lead in shaping the agenda and furthering the debate. Vienna could be taken as glittering proof that Lisbon can work, provided the member states remain reasonable and united by common interest.

What Is at Stake for Participating States?

Frankly, it is not that difficult to identify what should be done, both in the OSCE and in the wider security context. War in Georgia and the recent tragic developments in Kyrgyzstan have once again bluntly disclosed all the weak points of the OSCE, and the lack of honest and strategic partnership on key security matters among its participating States. There is a need for far stronger and faster capacities for early warning and early action to prevent potential conflicts in good time. At the same time, the OSCE should have far more effective and robust tools for effectively managing conflicts and ensuring that action is taken in a co-ordinated manner during the post-conflict rehabilitation process to ensure that conflict does not re-emerge. In this respect, there is a clear need to ensure that OSCE institutions (Chairman-in-Office, Secretariat, HCNM, ODIHR, field operations, etc.) are trusted sufficiently by the participating States, so they can act more autonomously without being hindered by counterproductive political debates or the strictly individual

interests of participating States. The Corfu Process, therefore, is not only about building trust among participating States but also about strengthening their confidence vis-à-vis OSCE institutions. There is also a need to develop better mechanisms for following up the implementation of (or rather acting in response to violation of) OSCE norms, principles, and commitments, including in the field of human rights, which is and should remain the cornerstone of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security. The OSCE's political bodies should finally be turned into real platforms for open, frank, and straightforward day-to-day debates on how the participating States implement or disregard OSCE commitments and the recommendations of relevant OSCE institutions and how the situation can be improved in a co-operative manner.

The EU's priorities for the Corfu Process and beyond have gradually gained clear shape along the above-mentioned lines. Baroness Catherine Ashton presented them in condensed form at the OSCE informal ministerial meeting in Almaty in mid-July. She stressed that we should strive towards the same strategic vision: a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region that is whole, free, and at peace with itself, where disputes are solved peacefully and respect for common commitments is universal. In achieving this, the OSCE should become better at preventing, managing, and resolving conflicts; we have to stop and reverse the decay of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) and reinforce confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs), we need to strengthen the human dimension, and we need to reinforce the OSCE's ability to jointly tackle transnational and emerging threats and challenges that affect us all.

In Athens, ministers adopted an important political declaration on the follow up to the Corfu Process. Among other things, it contains a reference to a possible OSCE Summit in 2010, provided there is adequate preparation in terms of substance and modalities. Kazakhstan as the holder of the OSCE Chairmanship, the first country from Central Asia to do so, was entrusted with the elaboration by the end of June 2010 of an Interim Report for a joint session of the OSCE Permanent Council and the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation. It was understood that the report would determine the future direction of the process. Today, it can be argued that the Athens decisions on Corfu and a possible Summit have been almost fully implemented. Although Russia's interest in separating the EST from the Corfu dialogue meant that neither of the two decisions entirely cleared up the ambivalence and confusion, they did provide a means for continuing the structured debate on specific proposals and initiatives, and thus endeavouring gradually to reduce accumulated mistrust and suspicion and to diminish differences in conceptual approaches. And this is precisely what has happened in the first half of 2010.

On the basis of the Athens decisions, the Permanent Representatives in Vienna conducted a thorough overview of the following topics:

- the implementation of all standards, principles, and commitments of the OSCE;
- the role of the OSCE in early warning, prevention and settlement of conflicts, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation;
- the role of arms control and disarmament regimes and those aimed at strengthening trust and security in developing the security environment;
- transnational and multidimensional threats and challenges;
- economic and environmental challenges;
- human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as democracy and the rule of law;
- enhancing the OSCE's efficiency;
- co-operation with other organizations and institutions on the basis of the 1999 Platform for Co-operative Security.

The informal meetings allowed for varied perspectives to be presented in the form of concrete initiatives and proposals that could be taken forward. Today, the participating States have at their disposal an excellent analysis of the security environment and a good number of innovative proposals on how to address the modern challenges they and the OSCE are facing. They have been able to identify clearly areas of common interest, as well as topics in which it is possible to elaborate and adopt an ambitious but realistic action plan for future work. The Interim Report can also be seen as the set of common expectations on which the participating States are obliged to deliver. At the same time, the intense debate clearly disclosed the fundamental divergence of views on how security should be guaranteed in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area, which meant that the discussion often took place at an abstract level. However, the EU and the US were well aware that there was no other alternative than to make use of the window of opportunity made available by the Corfu Process in order to engage Russia and its allies in real dialogue. The alternative scenario would of course have been the continuing degradation of relations, confrontational rhetoric, stagnation in the settlement of frozen conflicts, militarization, the final breakdown of disarmament regimes, and the further deterioration of democracy and human rights in Russia and other post-Soviet countries.

The report encapsulates key points of the discussion and proposals. It is considered to be sufficiently balanced and inclusive to serve as a good platform for further debate. However, there is a general feeling that the brainstorming type of discussion has exhausted itself and that the participating States should now turn ideas into reality. Demand has been growing to move the process on to another, more real, phase.

The Russian Dilemma

Russia's approach to the Corfu Process has remained ambivalent. Moscow has so far considered the Corfu Process to be separate from the elaboration of the EST. Sometimes it has even looked as if Moscow lacks strategic clarity on how to approach Corfu. To illustrate this, it is enough to recall that, during the Athens Ministerial Council, the Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov originally intended to block the adoption of the decision on the continuation of the Corfu Process, but changed his mind at the very last moment.

The question naturally arises as to whether the Corfu Process is sufficient to satisfy Moscow's ambitions regarding the EST and its vision of Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security. Most participating States have rejected the Treaty or are refusing to engage in discussion of the Treaty as such, but have nothing against debating some of its elements within the framework of the Corfu dialogue. Russia persistently claims that the draft EST does not fall within the remit of the OSCE and that another, for the time being unspecified, forum should discuss it. Meanwhile, thanks also to the unity of the NATO and EU countries, the OSCE has become the main forum for renewed European dialogue. The Corfu Process therefore has to be seen as a concrete response to Medvedev's initiative, and there is nothing else on offer. This, of course, represents a complicated dilemma for Russia. Medvedev's proposal never concerned the OSCE as such. It was originally driven by the ambition to replace the OSCE with a new system of balance of power, focusing on the politico-military dimension. Despite that, Russian diplomacy let itself be drawn into the activities of the Finnish, Greek, and now Kazakh Chairmanships, and decided to participate actively in the Corfu Process. Moscow probably concluded that Corfu provided a suitable platform for it to advocate its views and initiatives, and that at this stage, it needed to be explored. Russia, for example, strongly and repeatedly argued in favour of its proposals regarding the elaboration of an OSCE Charter and a new mechanism for the settlement of disputes. At the same time, Moscow did not miss any opportunity to draw attention to the need to start discussions on the EST. Apparently, Russia has not yet defined its final position on the Corfu Process, and this uncertainty might last for an indefinite period of time.

Against this background, it is extremely important that the EU member states continue, along with the US, to act proactively and do not stop to produce new initiatives or explain existing ones in greater detail. At the same time, they should do their best to avoid bloc confrontation. In this regard, the Corfu Process is a litmus test of the EU's ability to co-ordinate its activities more effectively and act jointly whenever possible and necessary. So far the EU delegations in Vienna have passed this test with dignity, but the most difficult phase still lies ahead.

What Should We Expect Now?

The Almaty informal ministerial meeting has brought some clarity to the future of the process, although darkness still prevails as regards Russia's tactics. For the time being, no signs of a change in Moscow's strategy are visible. The participating States showed their readiness to strengthen joint efforts in tackling existing security issues in the OSCE area. Against the background of the agreement on dispatching OSCE police advisors to support the restoration of rule of law, public order, and diplomacy in Kyrgyzstan as soon as possible, a consensus was also reached on holding an OSCE Summit by the end of 2010 in Astana. Although the agenda of the Summit has yet to be finalized, the prevailing view is that the high-level meeting, which will take place eleven years after the Istanbul Summit, should take the Corfu debate to another, qualitatively higher level. It is expected that the Heads of State or Government will approve a strong political declaration at Astana, which is being referred to as a "launching summit". By this means, the participating States will demonstrate their will to agree upon a strategic vision of the security community in the OSCE area and reaffirm their full adherence to all OSCE norms, principles, and commitments in all security dimensions, as well as to their implementation. In practical terms, the Summit should adopt an integrated action plan, i.e. an outline of future negotiations, which should focus on the following topics:

- strengthening the institutional basis of the OSCE and transforming it into a fully fledged international organization;
- strengthening the conventional arms control regime and CSBMs, ensuring progress on restoring the viability of the CFE Treaty regime;
- strengthening the OSCE's capabilities and toolbox in all three dimensions with regard to early warning, conflict prevention and resolution, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation and undertaking joint work on ways to set the protracted conflicts in the OSCE area on the path towards peaceful settlement;
- ensuring increased attention to transnational threats in all three dimensions and enhancing OSCE involvement, within its mandate, in international efforts for the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan;
- countering post-crisis economic challenges, including adapting the OSCE Maastricht Strategy to current conditions; and
- strengthening the overall capacity of OSCE participating States to tackle existing challenges in the human dimension and enhancing the ability of the OSCE institutions to follow up on the implementation of recommendations made under their mandates.

Following the summer recess, the Permanent Representatives in Vienna will start working on the Summit's final documents. The Corfu Process is multi-

layered and multidimensional. It is an aggregate of several equations with many unknowns that may, but need not, be clarified in the process and dialogue itself. It is, however, important that the process is inclusive and that all players and proposals take part in it as it advances. In that regard, the understanding reached in Almaty was a real breakthrough.

Although the future of the Corfu Process is for the moment uncertain, its contribution is already visible, as it has generated a better atmosphere, and more openness and solidarity among the participating States, which allows the OSCE to slowly return to its original role. It is no secret that the OSCE was close to breaking down in 2007. At present, the Organization is perceived in a more optimistic light, although the Corfu Process remains more an opportunity than a real negotiation process for the time being. One of the by-products of Corfu was that the participating States have had a chance to refresh their understanding of the OSCE, its irreplaceable role for generating common purpose, and a sense of mutual dependence and a shared future. Once again, a belief in the added value of the OSCE has emerged. There is no doubt that the Organization might once again play the role of a forum for inclusive dialogue on European security, subject to the political will of all the participating States. Many have forgotten this unique role of the OSCE, and the Corfu Process helped them to rediscover it. There is also an opportunity for the OSCE to again become a platform for discussions on the fundamental principles of the coexistence of states and for building new trust among them despite differences in values. The OSCE might become a forum for generating the will to take common action against new, and increasingly complex security challenges and threats. So far, this is the main value that has been added by the Corfu Process. Although one should entertain no illusions, it should be welcomed that the process has been given a chance to develop further, so that the participating States can continue patiently to mediate differences of opinion in a co-operative manner.

The participating States should be well aware, however, that in the near future they will most probably not succeed in building such a stable and clearly defined security architecture as was in place during the period of bipolar division between East and West. Indeed, given the uncertain and diverse character of the new security threats, it will perhaps be entirely impossible to count on a stable and institutionalized security system. Although President Medvedev, in a speech made to Russian ambassadors in July this year, stressed that “we believe in the viability of our democratic institutions and will insistently develop them to make Russia a thriving society, based on the principles of liberty and justice”,⁷ it would be unrealistic to expect a major turn towards strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law

7 *Speech by Dmitry Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation, at the Meeting with Russian Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives to International Organizations, Moscow, 12 July 2010, at: http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/FB6F773B31E6DF0EC32577600033F759.*

in Russia in the near future. The same applies to other CSTO members. Therefore, the best scenario would be to achieve a common understanding on the cohabitation of different value systems in the OSCE region and their gradual convergence through more effective co-operation and co-ordination in the fight against our common enemy, i.e. the new security threats.

The Corfu Process and the upcoming Summit represent a historic opportunity to improve East-West relations and gradually build up a new security order based on trust, co-operation, respect for legitimate security interests, and compliance with universally accepted values. In order to alleviate traditional prejudices and harmonize the interests of individual states, it is vital to grasp the opportunity to agree on a common understanding and definition of security threats as well as on measures to eliminate them and thus to gradually overcome the deep misperceptions of values. From the point of view of the EU, Russian worries sometimes appear absurd, but they are in all likelihood still real for Russia, although it is questionable how much of this is just tactics and political marketing. The Corfu Process, if it is turned into real negotiations, may become an important instrument for influencing Russian thinking in the Euro-Atlantic direction.

Finally, even if both sides come to better comprehend the thinking and needs of the other party, Russia and its allies nonetheless have to understand that no strategic partnership is possible if the values of democracy and respect for human rights and the rule of law are not fully shared and respected. Being aware that all the other alternatives are worse, it is our duty to overcome the contradictions and get on with real negotiations, even if they may take many years to conclude.