

Ursel Schlichting

Preface

The year 2015 sees the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Final Act of Helsinki – the event that marked the “birth” of the OSCE. At the same time, since the beginning of 2014 the security situation in Europe has been convulsed by the Ukraine crisis. Against the background of tensions between Russia and the West, the OSCE has been accepted and made use of as the prime forum for security dialogue, giving the Organization an unhoped-for boost in prominence. Our special focus section this year “*After the Post-Cold War? The OSCE and European Security 40 Years after Helsinki*” – juxtaposes these two occurrences.

First of all, however, the 40th anniversary is an opportunity to take a look back at the eventful history of the CSCE/OSCE.¹

The signing of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) on 1 August 1975 was the culmination of two years of negotiations that had opened in Helsinki in July 1973. Today, the successor to the CSCE, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), includes 57 states from Europe, North America, and Asia, including all the successor states of the former Soviet Union. Already in the period between 1973/1975 and the end of the Cold War, the unmistakable key features of the CSCE/OSCE were unfolding: multilateral dialogue on security in Europe that ignored political and ideological boundaries and bloc mentalities, and a comprehensive concept of security. According to the latter, security only exists when it is understood to include human rights as an integral aspect and with equal standing to politico-military issues and economic and environmental topics. Consequently, security in Europe; economic, scientific and technological, and environmental co-operation; and co-operation on humanitarian issues are the three key areas of concern of the Helsinki Final Act, which is still the basis of security dialogue and co-operation within the OSCE today. Alongside a document on confidence-building measures, the “security basket” contains a catalogue of ten principles (the “Helsinki decalogue”) intended to regulate relations between the participating States. These include the sovereign equality of participating States, refraining from the threat or use of force, the inviolability of frontiers, the territorial integrity of states, and the need for peaceful settlement of disputes. The Helsinki Final Act is therefore considered to be the “founding document” of the CSCE/OSCE,

1 This retrospective is based on: Ursel Schlichting, *Die OSZE 40 Jahre nach Helsinki: Dialog statt Konfrontation – auch in Zeiten der Krise?* [The OSCE 40 Years after Helsinki: Dialogue over Confrontation – also in Times of Crisis?], Friedensakademie-Blog, at: <http://friedensakademie-blog.eu/2015/10/12/die-osze-40-jahre-nach-helsinki-dialog-statt-konfrontation-auch-in-zeiten-der-krise>.

even though it has no such status in international law; the decalogue remains the main “code of conduct” for the participating States.

However, the Final Act of Helsinki was more than just the basis for dialogue between Eastern and Western governments. Ordinary citizens also took notice of it, and, in the years following its adoption, it became a key point of reference for dissidents in Eastern Europe, who demanded the implementation of that which the Heads of State or Government had put their signatures to in Helsinki: respect for human rights and basic freedoms, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief – the seventh of the Helsinki decalogue’s principles.

It was also the CSCE that adopted the document that formally sealed the end of the Cold War: In the Charter of Paris for a New Europe of 21 November 1991, the Heads of State or Government from East and West declared “the era of confrontation and division of Europe” to have ended, replaced by “a new era of democracy, peace and unity in Europe” in which the rule of law and human rights are to be respected.

For many, this vision of a peaceful Europe should also have entailed a renunciation of military alliances. One of the visions of an alternative security architecture consisted in expanding the CSCE into a pan-European security organization, preferably on the basis of a treaty that was binding under international law, and ideally equipped with its own armed forces. Such conceptions ultimately proved unrealistic. Not only was the West unwilling to follow the example of the Warsaw Treaty Organization by dissolving NATO or placing it under the control of an organization in which Russia would have an equal voice; this vision also conflicted with the stubbornly persistent thinking – despite all the assurances to the contrary in commemorative declarations – in terms of “winners” and “losers” of the Cold War.

The euphoria also rapidly faded and gave way to disillusionment in another regard: New, intrastate conflicts, mostly interethnic in nature or “nationality conflicts”, many of which turned into secession conflicts, in the former Soviet Union and the collapsing multiethnic state of Yugoslavia, escalated into devastating wars, demonstrating all too clearly that a peaceful Europe remained a distant prospect.

During this period, the gradual and yet comprehensive institutionalization of the OSCE was initiated. Nearly all the structures and institutions that the OSCE currently possesses were created in decisions taken between 1990 and 1994. At the same time, the development of an extensive toolbox for preventive diplomacy began, and the first long-term missions for post-conflict rehabilitation, which were to become one of the Organization’s hallmarks, were deployed. Finally, at the Budapest Summit in December 1994, the CSCE was renamed the “Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe” (OSCE).

In the following years, the norm-setting function that had dominated the CSCE’s work was to be replaced by efforts to implement these norms. While

the priority was initially the settlement of the “frozen” conflicts in the post-Soviet area, and post-conflict rehabilitation and peace consolidation, above all in the former Yugoslavia, the focus now turned to the promotion of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights, largely in the transition countries. The second half of the 1990s and the start of the 21st century also saw the zenith of the OSCE’s long-term missions and field operations: from the OSCE Mission to Tajikistan; via the missions in Estonia and Latvia, which contributed to defusing the conflicts with the Russian minorities there before closing in 2001; to the OSCE’s large missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. Two further OSCE institutions that emerged in this period also provided success stories: the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which is best known for the comprehensive election observation missions it deploys in support of democratization processes, and the High Commissioner on National Minorities, who has mediated in numerous conflicts involving national minorities using quiet diplomacy based on impartiality and confidentiality.

At the same time, the interest of the Central European states in the OSCE gradually began to wane in the mid-1990s. The European Union was more attractive to them for economic reasons and NATO for reasons of military security. NATO’s gradual eastward enlargement began in 1999, and the expansion of the EU followed from 2004. Several CIS states, including Ukraine and Georgia, soon found themselves caught between the fronts.

The OSCE sought to compensate for the decline in significance that threatened it as a result of EU and NATO enlargement by taking on additional tasks and entering new areas of activity. The Charter for European Security, adopted at the Istanbul Summit in 1999, and the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century, which was finalized at the Maastricht Ministerial Council Meeting in 2003, identified numerous new threats to security alongside the ongoing danger of interstate and intrastate conflict: international terrorism and violent extremism, organized crime (trafficking in arms, drugs, and human beings), economic problems, and environmental degradation. New areas of activity developed around combating terrorism, policing, border security and management, and combating discrimination and intolerance. The Organization’s regional focus shifted to South East Europe, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia.

Nevertheless, during the same period, the political significance of the OSCE as a European security organization declined.

The looming re-emergence of political confrontation between “East” and “West” was also reflected within the OSCE. Russia and other CIS states increasingly criticized the fact that OSCE field operations were deployed exclusively in countries “East of Vienna”, their alleged interference in the internal affairs of the host states, election observation by ODIHR, and the neglect of hard security issues in favour of a supposedly exaggerated concern

with democracy and human rights. Other disputes, such as concern over NATO's operations against Serbia during the 1999 Kosovo conflict or plans for the deployment of missile defence systems in Poland and the Czech Republic – in short, the disregard of Russian interests and views in the international context – had a negative effect on the atmosphere within the Organization. Observers soon began to speak of a deep crisis within the OSCE. Finally, the Russo-Georgian War of August 2008 was an early precursor of the Ukraine crisis.

In response to the events of the Russo-Georgian War, the OSCE began to refocus on its comparative advantages and core competencies: the concept of comprehensive and co-operative security; open, permanent, multilateral dialogue; and its expertise in conflict prevention, peaceful conflict settlement, and the stabilization of post-conflict situations. The first tangible result of this was the decision on enhancing the OSCE's capabilities in early warning and early action of December 2011. This was the basis for an enhancement of the OSCE's crisis response mechanisms in the subsequent months. In particular, the creation of an internal roster of OSCE "first responders" – individuals already employed by the Secretariat or the field operations who could be called upon for deployment in conflict areas as rapidly as possible and who would later be replaced by newly recruited staff – and the development of a virtual pool of equipment for the supply of essential items at short notice proved invaluable as the Ukraine crisis escalated during 2014. They enabled the rapid creation and deployment of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), whose first team was able to take up its work in Kyiv on 22 March 2014, just one day after the 57 participating States had adopted the decision to deploy the SMM in the Permanent Council by consensus. At the same time, the 2014 Swiss OSCE Chairmanship made early and frequent use of the OSCE's available conflict-management instruments, e.g. by dispatching Special Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office to various negotiating formats. Particularly worth mentioning here is the Trilateral Contact Group, consisting of representatives of Ukraine, Russia, and the OSCE – the last represented by the Swiss diplomat Heidi Tagliavini – which agreed a twelve-point protocol in Minsk on 5 September 2014. Among its various clauses, this protocol, which was also signed by representatives of the separatists, called for a ceasefire, details of which were specified in a memorandum of 19 September and which the OSCE was tasked with monitoring. The arrangement on measures for the implementation of these agreements, which was reached within the "Normandy format" on 12 February 2015, further charged the OSCE with monitoring the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the designated security zone. This agreement brought the first hope that the tension might be relieved.

The first of the two special focus sections in the OSCE Yearbook 2015 links the 40th anniversary of the CSCE/OSCE with current developments in Euro-

pean security. Germany's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who will assume the OSCE Chairmanship in 2016, opens this chapter by asking what we can learn from the experience of Helsinki for European security in the 21st century and compares European peace orders past and present. Also taking a historical approach, Reinhard Mutz undertakes a critical analysis of the negotiations between East and West undertaken in the CSCE framework during the period of Europe's division and asks what the CSCE had achieved and failed to achieve by the end of the Cold War. Matthew Rojansky, Mikhail Troitskiy, and David J. Galbreath then analyse the current state of relations between Russia and the West against the background of the Ukraine crisis, examine its effects on security and co-operation in Europe, and focus particularly on the role of the OSCE. Finally, Maxime Lefebvre offers a French view of the Ukraine crisis and the new role for the OSCE that has resulted from it.

As in 2014, a second special focus section contains contributions relating to the Ukraine crisis itself with an emphasis on conflict prevention and crisis management. Heidi Tagliavini, the OSCE's representative in the Trilateral Contact Group until June 2015, gives a first-hand report of the OSCE-led mediation efforts that seek to resolve the conflict; Claus Neukirch once more provides an insider's insight into the activities of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. The lessons that the OSCE can already draw from the Ukraine crisis for the OSCE's future conflict management activities are the subject of Fred Tanner's contribution; at the heart of Jean P. Froehly's considerations is the contribution that ODIHR has made to defusing the crisis; Hans-Joachim Schmidt illustrates the close interconnections of crisis management and conventional arms control. Finally, P. Terrence Hopmann undertakes a historical comparison of the reactions to the first Ukraine/Crimea crisis from 1992-1996 and crisis management efforts in 2014 and 2015.

Away from the special focus sections, David Aprasidze examines domestic developments in Georgia, with a particular focus on the progress made and obstacles encountered on the way towards the consolidation of democracy. Three contributions focus on Central Asia: Ghaffor J. Mirzoev analyses the significance of religion and culture in the Tajik national consciousness; Thomas Kunze and Michail Logvinov describe potential Islamist threats to the region after the end of the combat mission by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan; and Arne C. Seifert considers specifically how "Islamic State" can be prevented from spreading into Central Asia. In a further contribution, Jenny Nordman examines the role of ethnic nationalism in the policies of states in the Western Balkans, while Daniela Pisoiu and Reem Ahmed explore the phenomenon of growing right-wing radical populist movements in Western Europe.

Three contributions concern themselves with questions of conflict prevention and resolution that are not directly connected to the Ukraine crisis: Jennifer Croft reports on the status of non-citizens in the Baltic states;

Gyorgy Szabo, the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan, discusses his work; and Samuel Goda outlines the activities of the OSCE Mission to Moldova.

In the section on the three dimensions of the OSCE and cross-dimensional challenges, Reinhold Mokrosch considers the relationship between religious tolerance and satire against the background of the attacks in Paris and Copenhagen in January and February 2015. Within the overall question of how tolerant religions need to be to serve peace, he discusses, on the one hand, whether religions are capable of tolerance at all, and, on the other, whether there should be limits to satire, or if, as Kurt Tucholsky suggested “anything goes”. There follows a plea by Omar Grech and Monika Wohlfeld for a proper balance between state and human security in dealing with the current Mediterranean refugee tragedy, after which Paul Holtom considers the OSCE’s role in the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty and Rory McCorley assesses the lessons that can be learned for future activities from the OSCE’s border monitoring operations in Georgia and follow-up activities. Finally, Natascha Cerny Ehtesham and Laurent Goetschel describe the increasing significance of civil society for the OSCE in the fields of human rights and peacebuilding.

We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this publication for their hard work. We are particularly grateful to the Secretary General of the OSCE, Lamberto Zannier, for this year’s Foreword, which provides us with much encouragement.

The fact that the OSCE is in a position to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, and thus its 40th birthday in 2015, is an indication that the concept of co-operative security and permanent multilateral dialogue on security in Europe has lost none of its relevance 25 years after the end of the Cold War. The OSCE’s strength continues to be its ability to sustain dialogue on security in Europe across political and ideological dividing lines as well as in crisis and conflict situations. It remains the only forum for multilateral security dialogue in Europe in which Russia is formally included as an equal member. By agreeing to the deployment of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine and the stationing of OSCE observers at two Russian border posts, Moscow has signalled that it does not wish to burn all its bridges, that its interest in co-operation and maintaining security dialogue has not entirely evaporated. Following a phase of reorientation in terms of tasks, competencies, and priorities, a period of uncertainty over its future relevance, during which the OSCE has sought to find its place within the complex system of European organizations, it appears that the Organization’s engagement in Ukraine is beginning to suggest some positive answers.