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The OSCE: Developments and Prospects

During 1999 we witnessed a humanitarian catastrophe the likes of which had not been seen in Europe since the end of the Second World War. The catastrophe in Kosovo was the result of a systematic policy of ethnic exclusion. Even over a period of many years we had not succeeded, by political means, in persuading the responsible government in Belgrade to co-operate in the spirit of the Charter of Paris. The military action by NATO was the ultimate response to this refusal to co-operate.

It will take years for the reconstruction work, which has only begun, to heal the deep wounds.

The dramatic developments in Kosovo make clear to us that overcoming ethnic nationalism - the old hostilities, feuds and wars between various popular groups - remains one of the biggest challenges for European security. And if we do not succeed the consequences, as in Yugoslavia, are devastating.

Against this background, the question of how conflicts in Europe can be dealt with constructively and in such a way as to prevent their escalation takes on an entirely new dimension. The OSCE has made conflict prevention its main responsibility. In view of what is happening in Kosovo, therefore, the question of how the OSCE can be strengthened is of the most immediate importance.

A Look Back

Let us recall that a decade ago, when the division of Europe was overcome, various people proposed the transformation of the then CSCE into an organization that would control and settle conflicts in the manner of a regional UN. Others thought that the CSCE process, which itself was a child of the Cold War, had completed its job and thus become superfluous.

As we can see today, the truth lies somewhere between these two viewpoints. It is true that the OSCE was unable to prevent the disintegration of Yugoslavia, with its horrifying consequences. But who could have done that? It is not just the OSCE that has failed. Other organizations have failed as well - the international community has failed.

The OSCE has followed a special path: facts and an appropriately pragmatic approach, rather than concepts and theories, have pointed the way. With preventive missions of modest size in Moldova, Georgia, Tajikistan, the Baltic states, the Ukraine and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the OSCE has in each case been able to introduce calm. The High Commissioner on National Minorities, working with discrete diplomacy, has lessened the

tension in difficult minority situations. This quiet operating method proved successful even when the public was scarcely aware of it.

The OSCE grew in importance in 1996 in Bosnia. At that time, the Organization, which had barely 150 regular employees, established a mission with more than 300 people to carry out and monitor the first elections in Bosnia. In the same year its Assistance Group in Chechnya was able to make an important contribution to ending the bloody conflict there. In the following year it replaced the UN in Croatia and, in Albania, co-ordinated with great flexibility the international efforts to save that country from collapse and to stabilize it. At the end of 1998, finally, it was given the task of monitoring the armistice agreement in Kosovo, using for that purpose personnel resources numbering ten times the Organization's normal complement. As part of the present reconstruction effort, the OSCE is also responsible, within the UN mission, for core areas such as building democracy, the media, monitoring human rights and training police.

The history of this organization is striking. After starting with modest sporadic activities in peripheral conflicts, it directed its attention to the hot spots of European security and has today become an organization on which people depend for conflict settlement. How will it now proceed? What is its future?

In principle it seems to me that there are two obvious alternatives. The first is to continue to follow the pragmatic path just described. In doing so, the OSCE - along with other organizations - would, depending on the situation, offer and provide its services, e.g. in building democracy, in a flexible fashion. In some instances it could improve its procedures and methods as well as its institutions.

The second, more visionary, alternative would be to expand the OSCE and to make it the central organization for preventing and settling conflicts in Europe. This role could be anchored in the Security Charter that is now under discussion.

Which role it will receive remains an open question - it depends, after all, on the will of the participating States. At this point I would like to say more about possibilities opened up by the second alternative.

The Challenges

The Kosovo crisis makes very clear to us the challenges that uncontrolled conflicts pose for European security. Every concept for conflict prevention requires that the causes of the conflicts be dealt with in time. How can this requirement be met?

As far as timely intervention is concerned many steps have been taken by various actors, especially within the OSCE framework - I am thinking of our own efforts in 1996, the year of our chairmanship, and of the efforts of succeeding presidencies; despite them, it must be said that insufficient interna-

tional attention was paid to the unarmed resistance in Kosovo, which lasted for years. Kosovo was not treated as a serious problem calling for solution until the Liberation Army, with its armed actions, provoked brutal reactions from Serbian units.

Attacking the causes of a conflict at their roots is a second requirement of conflict prevention. If we ask ourselves what causes underlay the crisis in Kosovo, the following are probably the most important ones to mention:

- systematic violation of human rights;
- unsolved minority issues;
- significant weaknesses in democratization and the building of civil societies;
- economic backwardness, big differences between social classes;
- resort to nationalistic ideologies to compensate for profound disappointments;
- the lack of structures and mechanisms for the peaceful solution of conflicts;
- underdeveloped structures for regional co-operation.

These are factors that play an important role not only in former Yugoslavia but in other countries in transition as well, even if they do not always have the same potential for escalation. The fragility of Russia and of other successor states to the former Soviet Union, the totalitarian legacy in Belarus that has not yet been overcome, the substantial human rights shortcomings in the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus, and unsolved minority problems in Turkey, as well as other countries, all weigh heavily on the continent.

Weaknesses of this kind in policy and structure call for a unified approach and effective conflict prevention requires a comprehensive, long-term stabilization strategy.

A unified approach of this kind cannot be provided by one organization alone. It calls for a co-ordinated effort by various responsible institutions. For this to work, however, a co-ordinated and integrated process is needed.

Finally - and this has been shown by the Kosovo crisis with exceptional clarity - the pan-European dimension of security co-operation - i.e. the inclusion of all actors, especially Russia - is indispensable. It is hard to imagine that a durable political solution for Kosovo and the long-term stabilization of the region can be achieved without Russia. Without Russia's active participation there will be no security in Europe.

A Vision of Pan-European Security Co-operation?

What we need is a vision of pan-European security co-operation, a project for the future aimed at a large, communal Europe. It is my view that the OSCE

could develop such a vision. The OSCE has the potential for it and has, indeed, already begun working on this task.

First the institutional aspect: the OSCE is the only organization that covers the whole area of greater Europe and it alone has a comprehensive mandate that includes the human, military and economic dimensions of security.

Second, an approach to a greater Europe already exists within the framework of the OSCE. It is, of course, enormously heterogeneous but it has a rudimentary "constitution" in which principles and values are set forth: democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, protection of national minorities, the market economy, the indivisibility of security, the building of a common security area without new divisions. These are the fundamental values, principles and objectives to which the 55 participating States have committed themselves. As far as we can tell, these values have not been realized everywhere; but they exist. All that is needed is the courage to ensure that their validity is acknowledged and that they be applied.

What must we do? I believe the following three lines of strategy deserve examination.

Include Russia

Russia must be fully integrated into European security policy. This enormous country, although very fragile, is very much a part of Europe by virtue of its population and its rich culture. It merits a place in the framework of European security co-operation. It cannot be ignored, despite its present weakness. Possibilities for the better inclusion of Russia are ready at hand. We could, for example, take a closer look at some of the old proposals it has tabled in the OSCE: that of giving a legal statute to the OSCE; assigning the leading role in crisis management in Europe to the Organization; strengthening its economic dimension; and expanding its operational capabilities. Who would be harmed by this? We would, in any event, have to take care that the Organization retains its unbureaucratic flexibility.

Comprehensive Conflict Prevention

If conflict prevention is to be effective, the objective must be to deal with the causes of the conflict. We have already pointed to the profound political and structural weaknesses that are common to many countries in transition. Building durable democratic structures in these countries is a necessary condition for lasting development. This cannot be done without a comprehensive approach.

The OSCE must develop its initial approach into a full-scale programme. Like the United Nations it has a comprehensive mandate. The participating States have transferred certain responsibilities to it relating to security, mili-

tary affairs, the advancement of democracy and the rule of law, human rights and economic matters.

Some may of course object that in particular fields other organizations have the same or vastly greater capabilities and especially that they have incomparably more resources at their disposal. What is missing, however - despite the various mechanisms that are already in existence - is the comprehensive approach. Economists preoccupy themselves with the economy, diplomats with diplomacy and military people with security issues. But who guides and coordinates the whole effort?

The OSCE could, in particular, integrate the following elements:

- Support for the transitional process is made conditional on good governmental leadership. It is not a question of having the OSCE become an active participant in economic activity; it could, however, serve as a framework for flexible co-ordination so as to ensure that in situations where there is a risk of conflict the transitional processes are accompanied by progress towards democracy and the rule of law.
- Support is given for sound and democratic conduct of government. If one looks at all of the organizations and authorities that are active in this field - the Council of Europe, the UNDP, the High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the European Commission's PHARE programme, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the OSCE's field missions, and many other activities, including the contributions of individual countries - one can hardly speak of transparency. Comprehensive policies will be needed to avoid duplication, overlapping and rivalries. The objective is clear: to create democratic structures, operating under the rule of law, which provide favourable conditions for economic development. The OSCE would have certain comparative advantages here - these would permit it to play a co-ordinating role both in the centres and on the local scene. The Organization already has a dense network of representations of various kinds: long-term missions, centres, offices. The recently opened OSCE Centres in Central Asia are already carrying out such responsibilities. Through steady dialogue with the countries, they support them in all aspects of transition so as to exercise a profound influence on the building of political and social structures. The network of these Centres could be expanded - in such regions as Dagestan or Fergana Valley, for example.
- The formation of civil societies is of fundamental importance. Despite the efforts of the OSCE and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the potential of non-governmental organizations could be better used. The OSCE could, for example, devote more attention to public-private partnerships in expanding such instruments like its long-term missions and offices.

- In the military field, finally, it is important to take effective steps to ensure that military forces are subject to civilian authority and that they maintain their neutrality.

Effective Conflict Management

Along with these long-term structural efforts, there must also be effective operational capacity to deal with crises. The OSCE must be able to operate like the fire department in conflict situations. For this purpose it needs to be strengthened as an independent instrument for the solution of conflicts. The following steps are illustrative:

- further strengthening the leadership role of the Chairman-in-Office and of the Troika through improved consultation mechanisms;
- upgrading the Permanent Council to make it an organ for providing central guidance;
- creating options for taking focused action when commitments are not met;
- expanding the Secretariat's capabilities in planning and implementation and giving it the right to recruit personnel independently.

In the phase of reconstruction following a violent conflict the OSCE should also play the central role. Kosovo once again serves as an example: as in Bosnia, the OSCE must play a central role in an international transitional administration. It has the resources to operate effectively and take responsibility in such fields as civil reconstruction, the building of democratic structures, media, monitoring of human rights, and police. It alone constitutes a framework which includes all actors - the United States and Russia as well as other European countries, in addition to the European Union.

Finally, the OSCE is well suited to provide the organizational roof for the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe proposed by Germany. The OSCE offers a framework that guarantees the inclusion of all actors, which is indispensable for such an undertaking.

Outlook

These are just a few thoughts on the building of a greater Europe. The ongoing negotiations on a European Security Charter represent an opportunity to develop the OSCE along these lines.

The OSCE has not exhausted its potential. It has kept its special appeal:

- It is accepted politically in Russia and in other countries in transition.
- It continues to be the only organization in Europe of which the United States and Russia are formally members, and it is recognized as a legitimate authority when it comes to peaceful intervention.
- It is unbureaucratic and flexible. Given the political will and competent leadership it could become the model for an effective and economical international organization.

The challenge is there. Only the steady growth of broad-gauge co-operation between Vancouver and Vladivostok offers the promise of lasting peace in Europe. Our European history teaches: spheres of influence, dividing lines and exclusions, thinking in terms of coalitions and repression have never succeeded in establishing lasting security and stability. There are alternative ways of achieving this goal. I have tried here to develop a rather visionary alternative. We know, however, how many difficulties and obstacles lie in the way - the negotiations on a European Security Charter make that abundantly clear. Even so, a strengthened OSCE would give us great opportunities.