

## **The Historical Experience of the Neutral and Non-aligned States in the CSCE Vienna, 22/23 February 2007**

### **Conference Report**

On 22/23 February 2007 a two-day oral history conference was held in Vienna, Austria, on the history of the neutral and non-aligned states in the CSCE during the Cold War. The conference was organized by the [Austrian Institute for International Affairs \(OIIP\), Vienna](#), together with the [Institute for Strategy and Security Policy of the National Defence Academy, Vienna, Austria](#). The event opened at the National Defence Academy on Thursday night, 22 February, with a public panel discussion on the topic “The CSCE/OSCE Experience as a Model for Today’s World”. The following day, 23 February, was entirely dedicated to a closed oral history workshop under the title “The Historical Experience of the Neutral and Non-aligned States in the CSCE” reuniting 12 former representatives of five neutral and non-aligned states and 10 researchers at the Austrian Institute for International Affairs.

The event was organized in co-operation with the [Parallel History Project on Co-operative Security](#) and set out to follow up on two previous history [conferences documenting the early steps of the CSCE](#) and the way to the signing of the [Helsinki Final Act 1975](#). It is in this context that the conveners of the conference, Thomas Fischer from the Austrian Institute for International Affairs, and Erwin A. Schmidl of the National Defence Academy, Vienna - the Austrian partner to the PHP - place their current research projects on the neutral and non-aligned states in the CSCE and on Austria and the Helsinki-process, respectively. These two projects stood at the outset of the February 2007 conference in Vienna. Beyond gathering new information and insight for these specific projects it was one of the aims of the conference to make available the main results of these proceedings to a wider research community. Therefore, summary notes have been taken during the two days discussion and have been edited and authorized by the participants of the conference for publication on the PHP-website.

The concept of the conference was twofold: The first evening was opened by a keynote speech of the current Austrian delegate to the OSCE in Vienna, Ambassador Margit Wästfelt, and some introductory remarks by Thomas Fischer. After this, three former members of neutral CSCE-delegations (Jaakko Iloniemi, Finland; Hans-Jörg Renk, Switzerland; Franz Ceska, Austria) together with Dov Lynch, Senior Advisor to the current Secretary General of the OSCE, discussed the value of historical lessons of the Helsinki process and evaluated what could possibly be applied of this model to other regions in today’s world.

The second day was split into four chronological panels concentrating exclusively on the historical experience of the neutral and non-aligned states in the CSCE process during the years 1969 to 1983 (from Helsinki to the Madrid follow-up meeting). Based on the multi-archival research in various countries in the course of the ongoing research project by Thomas Fischer it was for a first time possible to confront the actors with the documents and let them re-discuss their positions at the time.

The first panel dealt with the origins of the Finnish CSCE-initiative of 5 May 1969 and the N+N countries preparation for the Multilateral Preparatory Talks to the CSCE in 1972/73 in Dipoli, Helsinki. Special attention was paid to the discussions on the possible neutral venues for the different stages of the conference (Helsinki, Vienna, Geneva). The second panel, dealing with the talks in Geneva in 1973-1975, opened with the question of who created the “basket-concept” (Switzerland and Austria both claiming the credit for it) to move on to the beginnings of a closer neutral and non-aligned co-operation, which evolved around the military aspects of security (CBM’s, as a reaction to the exclusion of the N+N from the

MBFR talks). Considerable time was spent on the discussion where the individual delegations got their instructions from (if they had any), and to what degree the possibility to make their own instructions contributed to the success of the negotiations. Finally, the role of microstates such as Liechtenstein was evaluated. Panel three continued with the negotiations in Geneva looking at the difficulties in the compilation of the Final Act, including the meaning of basket 2 (economic co-operation) as well as the strategic horse-trading between baskets 1 (security) and 3 (human rights provisions). In the latter case, the N+N-states played a decisive role in bringing about the so-called package deal of summer 1974 by establishing a linkage in the preamble of basket 3 to the catalogue of principles in basket 1. All participants stressed the importance of the follow-up mechanism to the conference, a concept the N+N-states put much emphasis on in the negotiations leading to the Final Act. At the end of panel three the sometime erratic performance of Malta and the considerable concern it caused the neutral and non-aligned collaboration was invoked. Panel four finally set out to advance the discussions to the Belgrade 1977/78 and Madrid 1980-83 follow-up meetings. Remembering the significance of the first follow-up conference being held in Yugoslavia, it was agreed that the prospects for any substantive closing document were illusionary under the prevailing international circumstances. The awakened interest of US politics in the CSCE under the Carter presidency that decided to make it a stronghold of its international human rights policy narrowed room for manoeuvring for the N+N considerably. Their role was mainly redefined to mediating between East and West. An assessment of the importance of this intermediary function to keep the Helsinki process alive notably in Madrid was tried, some of the participants invoking the danger of the Soviets walking out of the negotiations in the context of a renewed atmosphere of Cold War (after the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan and martial law in Poland).