

The CSCE-/OSCE – Experience A Model for Today's World?

Thursday, 22nd of February 2007, 18 p.m.
Austrian National Defence Academy, Vienna

Welcome

Raimund **Schittenhelm** (Commander/National Defence Academy)
Otmar **Höll** (Director, Austrian Institute for International Affairs)

Keynote Speaker

Margit **Wästfelt** (Ambassador, Head of OSCE Department, Austrian Ministry of Foreign Ministry)

Introduction

Thomas **Fischer** (Conference convener, Research Project Co-ordinator)

Panel Discussion

Jaakko **Iloniemi** (Ambassador of Finland)
Hans-Jörg **Renk** (Former CSCE Delegate of Switzerland)
Franz **Ceska** (Ambassador of Austria)
Dov **Lynch** (Senior Adviser to the SG of the OSCE)

Chair

Erwin A. **Schmidl** (National Defence Academy)

Hans-Jörg Renk replaces Ambassador Edouard Brunner, who had to cancel on short notice due to health problems.

Keynote speech by **Margit Wästfelt**:

Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik was supposed to come but had to cancel due to her tight schedule. Ambassador Wästfelt elaborates on the origins of CSCE and believes in the active role of 'N+N countries'. OSCE process today is a synonym of what we call 'soft security'; important synergy effects with UN and EU Human Rights Agencies. OSCE today is a perfect example of an operative organization. It leads the most inclusive Euro-Atlantic and Asian dialogue, including also Karabach and Transnistria. OSCE has helped to strengthen democratic structures and has created an active parliamentarian component. Currently, the OSCE parliamentarians meet in the Hofburg in Vienna. OSCE is far from having exhausted its capacities – is very active in the destruction of ammunition stocks, reduction of small arms and weapons. Members do share a comprehensive model of security – fight against organized crime, discrimination, tolerance issues, just to name a few. In a recent Islam Conference organized by the Austrian Foreign Ministry in Vienna the great importance of the tolerance issue has been demonstrated. Here again, the role of the N+N must be highlighted in this process.

2006 EU-chairmanship of Austria has seen a successful co-operation between OSCE and EU.

In the future, more 'expertise sharing' is planned between the two. Basic confidence building measures are of importance for the Middle East Peace Process. But it is necessary to further strengthen OSCE innovations supported by Austria – the role of the Secretary General, field missions, legal capacity, mediator in unsolved conflicts, development of civil crises management. OSCE meanwhile has a great experience in conflict prevention. It is important to keep it an operative organization.

Last not least, the new OSCE headquarters in Vienna will be finished on time in one of the town Palaces, hand over to the organization is planned for October 2007.

Thomas Fischer:

Explains the concept behind tonight's event. Idea grew out of scholarly research project that focuses on the historic role of N+N states in the CSCE/OSCE process. One of the purposes of the Oral History is to cross check what will be said here with archival material.

The Cold War is long gone. Still thinking in historical analogies is widely applied by politicians, when looking into the collective memory for a way out of current dilemmas. OSCE process can be taken as an example. Conditions of the original process need to be established first, only then analogies and an assessment whether it can be exported to other regions is possible.

But how did original CSCE start, where did it depart from, what were the decisive moments? In May 1969 the original Soviet demand for a European security conference was taken up with a Finnish Memorandum, which engaged also the West in the project. The Finns had their own good reasons to launch the appeal. It was seen as a possible chance to achieve a framework for comprehensive security – and it was never meant to be reduced to military questions, alone. Big achievement of the Helsinki negotiations was the famous concept of '3 baskets'. This concept was unique and is worth to be recalled in detail – much of the so called process was strategic horse trading between the baskets. N+N states played a decisive role in this inter-basket procedure. How did they come to play this role will be elaborated by Dr. Renk later. In any case, it was a dual approach – static and dynamic, also transforming aspects contributed.

Why did SU leadership accept the transforming aspects? Ambassador Ceska will talk about this issue.

It is absolutely crucial to avoid pitfalls of wrong historical analogy. Authoritarian regimes because of the CSCE-experience and the end of the Soviet system today are afraid, when it comes to the transformative aspects of such a process – Mr Lynch from GS office is invited to depict today's scenario.

Erwin Schmidl introduces speakers and leads discussion.

Jaakko Iloniemi

1961 joined Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador to the CSCE in Geneva, later Under Secretary of State, and Ambassador to the US. Board Member of the Union Bank of Finland .

Starts with a disclaimer. What he says has to be taken 'Cum grano salis', he remembers things as they should have been done. Did we have a clear prospect of achieving something durable? There will be different answers from members of the participating states – there were many battles fought. It is also necessary to mention that the entire process was much more complex than it looks like from a distance. There were two military blocs and a handful of members, which were not part of it. Negotiations were outside the military alliances. However a closer co-operation within the EC was implemented for a first time in an international negotiation framework.

Did we achieve something? Many claim credits for the end of the Cold War: Russian dissidents, Afghan taliban, Polish Pope, Solidarnosc... the CSCE has made a considerable contribution.

Recent personal experience: I talked to an Iranian group in Teheran, they were brilliantly briefed and non-ideological. Like well trained Western diplomats. But unfortunately, the discussions didn't lead anywhere. Thus the question always remains: What is applicable? – this was not.

CSCE was a unique phenomenon in a given situation: two blocs and the N+N in between. I believe that something of this experience could be transferred but not too much.

Hans-Jörg Renk – replacing Edouard Brunner.

After CSCE: Press Spokesman of various international organizations (including EFTA), and multinational companies

Best wishes by Mr Brunner. He is recovering, and as alert as ever. Wishes to convey a few thoughts of Mr Brunner on the topic and then continue with his own ideas.

Brunner believes that the most important contribution of the N+N states was to insist on the follow-up meetings. One can state that the N+ N states were the only parties really committed to the follow-up process. European Community was sceptical that such a platform could jeopardize its own structure. SU hesitated since they were not very eager to discuss human rights, USA was not interested in the CSCE at least at the beginning. Self-dynamics of conference were not predictable.

Follow up Belgrade, Madrid kept internal debate initiated by Helsinki Final Act in Eastern Europe alive. Brunner does not believe that OSCE could become a model for other parts in the world, especially not in the Middle East.

To Mr. Renk, it is fascinating that N+N cooperation had never been planned and this is maybe reason of success. No master plan in the background. Came about naturally, in a way inevitable in a conference dominated by blocs that the countries outside the blocs should work together. They were never under pressure to succeed, totally free to co-operate or not.

The 4 Neutrals did not have a common strategy to start with. Each country had own proposals, all in basket 1: Austria put an emphasis on Security and Middle East questions, Sweden on disarmament and Switzerland on the peaceful settlement of disputes, while Finland in Dipoli concentrated on its role as host country. 'Gang' of 4 neutral negotiators (co-ordinators) in basket 3 in Geneva, seeking compromises between East and West while promoting at the same time their own proposals. Role was accepted by other delegations because Neutrals did not act on behalf of others. Neutrals avoided any "ganging up" with the West. Therefore, Western countries had sometimes problems since

they did not understand that Neutrals did not always side with Western delegations. Basket 3 was first introduced by the European Community in January 1973. N+N cooperation started in February 74 in Geneva with Yugoslavia, Cyprus, Malta, etc. Military aspects of security at the forefront since N+N countries were excluded from MBFR and some of the N+N were more affected by security questions than bloc countries. Confidence building measures (CBM) were intensively discussed. N+N proposal on CBM provided some credibility to move on to other questions, such as “Package deal” of 1974 (balance between principles and basket 3). N+N did not confine themselves to role of go-between; their activity as authors of substantial proposals was even a precondition for their role as mediators.

Franz Ceska:

He was in the permanent mission to Geneva from 1972-1975. Head of Austrian Delegation to Madrid and Follow Up Meetings.

CSCE process was the most fascinating period of my life, by far. As Jaakko Itoniemi said personal remarks should be taken ‘cum grano salis’, rather how we wished things to be. The CSCE process goes back to a Soviet idea, indeed. Cold War didn’t bring any advantage to anybody. The Soviet goals with the Conference on European Security were the recognition of European borders, the recognition of GDR, the creation of security system, which should have led to dissolution of NATO. Western countries were not eager to discuss these issues when they were first proposed in the 1950s. Only by the end of the 1960s they approached the idea. The conference had to be thoroughly prepared by parallel negotiations on reduction of conventional armaments and the inclusion of human rights questions. Another prerequisite for a first meeting was the situation of Berlin. When these preconditions were met, the conference could start. It was also made clear that the US and Canada will take part. The essential goal was the institution of a process of change. In a way this saved détente, which was in a pretty bad shape in the 60s. So, it would be exaggerated to claim that there was a clear aim right from the beginning. In the early 70s nobody had the hope of a serious change, nobody really thought that the Eastern bloc could ever end. Through patient discussions we discovered for ourselves that we had the better arguments and the SU started to run short of arguments. In addition, that we could also impose conditions on them which could, in the long run, lead to an evolution. As of 1973, 74 I started to write in my reports that this may be the beginning of an evolution to the fall of communism and everybody thought I was crazy. For a long time, the prejudice prevailed that the West had got nothing but windy talks, even that Helsinki was seen as a capitulation where Western governments had accepted the raids of the Kremlin and had got nothing in exchange, was f.e. to be read in Le Figaro still in 1985.

But, what is usually ignored by commentators and scholars, also personal relations have an impact on the results of such an endeavor. Unlike other conferences the western participants had the patience to sit down and let discussions develop. There was large leeway for the negotiation process from their respective governments. The preparatory meeting in Dipoli (Nov.1972-June 1973) brought the decisive input through the final recommendations of Helsinki – the “blue book”. The signature of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 triggered not only hope but people discovered that their leaders have signed agreements.

Role of N+N – most important was the fact that the delegates were free to submit their own ideas, that they were expected to do so. They proposed solutions themselves. For most of the governments it was too complicated to give us detailed instructions since the scenario changed quickly and instructions from yesterday could be obsolete tomorrow. N+N had an essential role to play. There were periods when the Eastern and also some Western countries would not have been unhappy to get rid of Helsinki process but N+N states kept it going. This can be regarded as our function.

To conclude: CSCE was an ideological struggle and played an important role in the change of Europe. Who was instrumental? Example: no Polish Pope without the CSCE.

Dov Lynch:

Senior adviser to the office of the SG of the OSCE in Vienna. No personal recollections from the process.

There is much to learn from CSCE process and nobody has collected these experiences, so far. The conference is an excellent idea, since the OSCE is poorly studied. Two starting points to assess the relevance of OSCE. There is definitely an interest in CSCE and OSCE experience. 1st feature: Helsinki was an extremely dynamic process. No static model. Three decades of constant evolution, adaptation and change in the European landscape. This requires flexibility and great imagination. OSCE of 2007 is the result of a long process. Today it's a multilayered organization run by 56 states, but still strange to outsiders. It is a forum for political dialogue. Provides dynamism. On the negative side it is sometimes said that it is a mere talking shop. 2nd striking feature: decisions among this heterogeneous group are taken by consensus. 'Building consensus' was of course often cursed. But it guaranteed that it was and is done with greater conviction. Mobilizing factor. 3rd feature: comprehensive approach to security. It is a laboratory for ideas. This was radical in the 70s. That human rights were linked in the larger context of security and a free society is a safeguard against instability. Last point, the attempt to implement shared values relied on each state accepting responsibility. They are not legally enforceable. Relies on good will of states to implement them in their own pace. Mutual assistance was offered.

Conclusion –3 principal lessons:

1st lesson: List of principles to guide the interactions of member states.

2nd lesson: building security can only be seen comprehensively (military, economic, humanitarian)

3rd lesson: states must agree to process of engagement (permanent negotiations).

Model of CSCE and OSCE cannot be magic solution for regions. Basis is the principle of equality. Countries with different values, but differences were placed in a context.

Floor open for questions:

Heinz Gärtner, (Austrian Institute for International Affairs, OIIP)

Quick comment. I think that the Organization could not be applied elsewhere, that's history. But we can learn from the context. Recognition of territorial sovereignty, and the emphasis on fundamental freedoms and human rights, maintaining the diplomatic dialogue, and the whole process in the area of arms control.

These 3 factors were powerful for soft regime change.

Mr Stakl (editor, Der Standard)

A question is on my mind for a long time: in Dipoli, where the principles were laid down. Who came up with the 'basket' idea?

Ph.D. student in Vienna

How important is the legal dimension. Would it hurt the process of evolution?

Anonymous

How much of the CSCE is likely to survive on a permanent basis?

Answer **Jaakko Itoniemi** to question about legal dimension: Final act was a political declaration but no legally binding instrument.

Finland was aware that a politically important document was to be drafted. They thought that having the signatures of the supreme leaders of participating countries would be just as good as a legal frame.

Answer **Hans-Jörg Renk** to basket question: Security and economic co-operation were already on the Eastern agenda. But the West and the Neutrals wanted to bring in a 3rd point, but not to call it agenda point No. 3 in order not to "scare" the East. And then the idea was to call it 'basket'. Swiss delegation was asked to put some order to papers. Easy task, separated it to 4 baskets (Baskets 1-3 plus Follow-up). By end of January 73 a paper was drafted which contained all proposals by all delegations.

Franz Ceska cannot comment on the basket question, he was himself not present in Dipoli. Joke: What was the difference between a NATO secret and an EC secret. Answer: 5 minutes.

On the legal question: A legally binding agreement would have never been ratified.

Dov Lynch on Russian Federation: Russians were keen to deepen work in the economic sphere.

Question on survival: it is great to disappear due to success. Job is not done yet.