

Forty-five Years of Dialogue Facilitation (1972–2017)

Ten Lessons from the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to investigate how the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) succeeded in channelling the Cold War in a peaceful direction by facilitating a Pan-European dialogue during the second half of the Cold War (1972–1990), and what lessons we can learn from it today in terms of dialogue facilitation, so as to raise the profile of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and reduce international tensions. It is based on the hypothesis that the CSCE facilitated the ‘multilateralisation of European security’ through dialogue, and stabilised European relations by turning security into a joint venture. This article concludes with ten recommendations for facilitating dialogue through the OSCE so as to multilateralise European security again today.

Keywords

dialogue facilitation – European security – multilateral diplomacy – Cold War – Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe

In the wake of the crisis in Ukraine and the Russian annexation of Crimea, ‘the question of war and peace has returned to our continent’, as the (former) foreign ministers of Germany, Austria and Italy emphasised in several major newspapers just before the 23rd OSCE Ministerial Council in Hamburg from 8–9 December 2016. In order to resolve international tensions, the so-called ‘OSCE troika’ appealed for placing the Organization of Security and Co-operation in

Europe (OSCE) ‘at the heart of multilateral diplomacy in Europe’.¹ The then OSCE chairman, German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, even launched ‘a structured dialogue’ in Hamburg ‘in order to find a common path to greater security for us all’.² This appeal tallies with the OSCE’s 2015 report by the Panel of Eminent Persons in the wake of the Ukraine crisis: with the motto ‘back to diplomacy’, it argues for ‘European Security as a Common Project’.³ It also echoes the role of the OSCE’s predecessor, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which facilitated a Pan-European security dialogue during the Cold War. According to Lamberto Zannier, the OSCE’s secretary general, we nevertheless paradoxically ‘lost the capacity to engage in dialogue’ *after* the Cold War.⁴

The aim of this article is to investigate how the CSCE process succeeded in channelling the Cold War in a peaceful direction by facilitating a Pan-European dialogue during the second half of the Cold War (1972–1990), and what lessons we can learn from it today in terms of this so-called ‘dialogue facilitation’. As a *cooperative process* between rivalling parties, rather than an organisation of likeminded countries, the CSCE is a fascinating case-study of dialogue facilitation. Bridging the Cold War divide through establishing a multilateral dialogue was in fact its *raison d’être*. The joint effort of thirty-five countries to explore common notions of European security and cooperation during two decades of international tensions is unique. My article is based on the hypothesis that this facilitated a Pan-European dialogue, which caused the ‘multilateralisation of European security’, as I call it, and stabilised European relations by turning European security into a joint venture. Such a process of multilateralisation is also needed today, since ‘it is more urgent than ever to rebuild trust and

1 ‘Eine starke OSZE für ein sicheres Europa’, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Sebastian Kurz and Paolo Gentiloni, 7 December 2017, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Retrieved 25 May 2017, <http://plus.faz.net/evr-editions/2016-12-07/pjlfVTXSNNgvVyUcHiR5J2bo?GEPC=55>.

2 OSCE 23rd Ministerial Council, Speech by the Chairperson-in-Office and Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Closing Session, 9 December 2016, Hamburg. Retrieved 4 June 2017, <http://www.osce.org/cio/288066?download=true>.

3 ‘Back to Diplomacy: Final Report and Recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security as a Common Project’, November 2015. Retrieved 25 May 2017, <http://www.osce.org/networks/205846?download=true>.

4 ‘In de Koude Oorlog werd er gepraat, nu escaleert het’, interview with Lamberto Zannier, OSCE topman, 17 November 2016, *NRC Handelsblad*. Retrieved 25 May 2017, <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2016/11/17/in-de-koude-oorlog-werd-gepraat-nu-escaleert-het-5327964-a1532241>.

reconsolidate European security as a common project', as the Panel of Eminent Persons underlined in a report in November 2016.⁵

This article will therefore approach the CSCE as a long-term, Pan-European process of dialogue facilitation, which continued even in the face of severe crises. It will not focus on the negotiations resulting in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act,⁶ or emphasise the importance of human rights,⁷ as has been done to date. It will instead debunk several conventional wisdoms, and enable a better understanding of the OSCE's prehistory, while recommending ten principles to facilitate a new Pan-European security dialogue on the basis of the best practices from the CSCE. By doing so, this article will contribute to a new European security dialogue, since the 'differing [historical] interpretations are both a symptom and a cause of the crisis in European security'.⁸ Starting from the CSCE's inception in 1972 and based on primary sources, it will identify a few aspects which contributed to its success during the Cold War and which, if replicated, could also contribute to resolving 'questions of war and peace' through a multilateral, Pan-European dialogue today. In order to draw lessons for Western European relations with Russia, this article will focus in particular on the interaction between the Soviet Union and the West during the years of the CSCE. It will conclude with ten principles for raising the profile of the OSCE so as to reset European security by facilitating a pan-European security dialogue. Even though today's challenges are different, the need for dialogue facilitation is all the more urgent.

Transcending the East–West Divide

The mere existence of the CSCE was a huge step away from the prevailing Cold War dichotomy in the early 1970s. Uniting all thirty-three European countries

5 'Renewing Dialogue on European Security: A Way Forward', Report on outreach events of the Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security as a Common Project in 2016, 23 November 2016, p. 4. Retrieved 4 June 2017, <http://www.osce.org/networks/291001?download=true>.

6 E.g. J. Maresca, *To Helsinki*, Duke, 1984; L. Ferraris, *Report on a Negotiation: Helsinki, 1972–1975*, Geneva, 1979; V. Mastny, A. Wenger et al. (eds.), *Origins of the European Security System: The Helsinki Process Revisited, 1965–75*, London and New York, 2008; and the recent issue of the *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18, 2016, no. 3 on *The CSCE, the German Question and the Warsaw Pact*, which solely deals with the CSCE up to 1975.

7 E.g. S. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network*, Cambridge, 2011; and D. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights and the Demise of Communism*, Princeton, 2001.

8 'Renewing Dialogue on European Security', November 2016, p. 4.

(except Albania), Canada and the United States in one multilateral conference, the conventional East–West divide was transcended. Moreover, the fate of European security no longer rested solely with the superpowers, nor were the dynamics between NATO and the Warsaw Pact decisive. Through the consensus rule smaller countries also gained a stake in European security, and the scope of the conference also included the neutral and non-aligned countries. All European countries accordingly became involved in conducting the Cold War, which transformed the nature of the Cold War permanently.

The idea of a European security conference was, indeed, not a superpower initiative, but had been proposed by the Polish foreign minister Adam Rapacki at a United Nations General Assembly in December 1964. Between 1965 and 1969 all Warsaw Pact members had been involved in designing a proposal for such a conference which would be acceptable to NATO. These preparations had led to genuine discussions in the Soviet alliance, with smaller countries – Poland, Romania and Hungary – generally taking the lead. The Warsaw Pact (WP) proposal for a European security conference adopted in Budapest in March 1969 marked the beginning of the CSCE.⁹ It was the first such proposal to be approved by NATO, whose demand to include Canada and the US in the process was accepted by the WP. It tallied with a tendency on both sides of the Iron Curtain to marry defence with détente¹⁰ and to proliferate détente beyond the superpowers. The CSCE thus gave rise to a particular kind of *European détente* as distinguished from the customary bipolar superpower détente.¹¹

The process started with the so-called multilateral preparatory talks in Dipoli, on the outskirts of Helsinki, in November 1972. According to the Soviet head of delegation, Yuri Kashlev, ‘this was an outstanding event comparable in scope to the 1815 Vienna Congress or the 1918 Versailles Conference’.¹² Indeed

9 See for more information on the role of the Warsaw Pact in the prehistory of the CSCE: L.C. Crump, *The Warsaw Pact Reconsidered: International Relations in Eastern Europe, 1955–1969*, London and New York, 2015.

10 See on the NATO side ‘The Future Tasks of the Alliance, Report to the Council – “The Harmel Report”’, 13–14 December 1967. Retrieved 25 May 2017, http://www.nato.int/cps/sv/natohq/official_texts_26700.htm.

11 See for this distinction: J. Hanhimäki, ‘Détente in Europe, 1962–75’, in M. Leffler and A. Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Volume II: Crisis and Détente*, Cambridge, 2010, p. 198.

12 ‘The CSCE in the Soviet Union’s Perspective’ by Professor Yuri Kashlev, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Poland, in *From 1975 to 1995 and Beyond: The Achievements of the CSCE – The Perspectives of the OSCE*, Berne, 1995, Dutch National Archives (DNA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), jhr. mr. J.L.R. Huydecoper van Nigtevecht, 1957–1996, Archief-bloknr.: Z238; Inv. nr.: 9, p. 28.

the Soviets regarded it not only as a means to legitimise the territorial status quo, as has often been argued,¹³ but also as a way to establish *peace* in Europe, which was in fact the main motivation behind supporting the conference of Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. Both the German Democratic Republic and the Oder Neisse border had in fact already been recognised in the Warsaw and Moscow treaties in 1970, and the WP countries in general were particularly concerned with a *normalisation* of European relations through the CSCE.¹⁴ The Western European participants regarded it as an opportunity to include human rights as part of European security – thus linking the security of states to that of individuals – whereas the nine members of the European Community in particular, including the recently accessed United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark, also considered it a suitable platform for the incipient European Political Cooperation.¹⁵ The United States, meanwhile, remained sceptical about the process, as exemplified by Kissinger's famous quip that 'they could write it in Swahili for all I care'.¹⁶

The ensuing Helsinki Final Act, signed on 1 August 1975, accordingly catered for all these different interests, which was reflected by its division into four so-called 'baskets' – security, economics, human contacts and follow-up conferences – with ten principles in the first basket, which related to *inter alia* human rights (principle VII), sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of frontiers.¹⁷ The Helsinki Final Act was regarded as an Eastern European 'victory' at the time, since its emphasis on the inviolability of borders legitimised the status quo,¹⁸ and as a Western triumph with hindsight, since the Western inclusion of human rights allegedly paved the way for Eastern

13 See e.g. T.D. Grant, 'Boundaries and Rights after 2014: Helsinki at a Crossroads', in *Security and Human Rights*, 2015, no. 25, pp. 385–386.

14 'APPEAL from all states participating in the Warsaw Pact to all European states', Budapest, March 1969, Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (ANIC) ale României, Romanian Communist Party Central Committee, International Relations, 7/1969, p. 40.

15 See for this argument A. Romano, *From Détente in Europe to European Détente: How the West Shaped the Helsinki CSCE*, Brussels, 2009.

16 Kissinger cited in J. Hanhimäki, 'Henry Kissinger: Vision or Status Quo', in F. Bozo, P. Ludlow et al. (eds.), *Visions of the End of the Cold War in Europe, 1945–1990*, New York, 2012, p. 202.

17 Conference on Security and Co-Operation in Europe, Final Act, Helsinki, 1975. Retrieved 25 May 2017, <http://www.osce.org/helsinki-final-act?download=true>.

18 Richard Davy rightly challenges this interpretation in 'Helsinki Myths: Setting the Record Straight on the Final Act of the CSCE, 1975', *Cold War History* 9, 2009, no. 1, pp. 1–2. He also observes that the declared 'inviolability of borders' was in fact a step back from the 'immutability of borders' as desired by Moscow, Warsaw and Berlin.

European dissidence and indirectly the end of the Cold War.¹⁹ Neither of these views is correct: the status quo was already legitimised *before* the Helsinki Final Act by the Moscow and Bonn treaties, and the link between human rights and the end of the Cold War is rather teleological.

In fact, regarding the CSCE as a zero-sum game defeats the purpose of the conference altogether: it was meant to transcend the East–West divide rather than confirming it. The conventional picture of the Western dynamic agenda versus the Eastern static agenda is accordingly misleading. Archival evidence shows that the Soviets attached great value to what they called ‘the Pan-European *process*’, which is one reason why they were prepared to make concessions on human rights.²⁰ Meanwhile, the head of the Soviet delegation was in fact more progressive than the Kremlin and deliberately endorsed human rights in order to force the Soviet bloc in a more reform-minded direction.²¹ The most salient breakthrough of the CSCE in terms of European security is not its inclusion of human rights, but the simple fact that European security was no longer a *contested* concept, but had become a *multilateral* concept. All countries – great, small, East, West and neutral – had had a stake in the drafting of the Helsinki Final Act and the Decalogue of ten principles in basket one. The Cold War in Europe had turned from a frozen, bipolar conflict into a peace-oriented, Pan-European *process*, which facilitated a dialogue between players who were usually not even on speaking terms. All the European players in the Cold War had committed themselves to an agenda for peace and security, while recognising that European security was indivisible. In the wake of the ‘multilateralisation of détente’,²² European security had multilateralisation, too.

The CSCE as ‘Safety-Valve’

During the follow-up conference in Belgrade (1977–78) the CSCE did, however, threaten to turn into a zero-sum game, primarily because of American insistence on the Eastern European commitment to human rights. Influenced by the new American president Jimmy Carter, the American delegation undermined

19 E.g. F. Baudet, “‘It Was Cold War and We Wanted to Win’: Human Rights, “Détente,” and the CSCE”, in *Origins of the European Security System*, pp. 183–198.

20 Yuri Kashlev, ‘The CSCE in the Soviet Union’s Perspective’, *DNA, MFA*, Z238, p. 51.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

22 A. Wenger, ‘Crisis and Opportunity: NATO’s Transformation and the Multilateralization of Détente, 1966–68’, *Journal of Cold War Studies* 6, 2004, no. 1, pp. 24–25.

all diplomatic conventions by 'naming names' and openly rebuking the Eastern European participants for their failure to implement human rights. The Eastern European reaction bears witness to the fact that maintaining the territorial status quo was not the sole aim of the WP countries. That had, after all, already been sealed (again) by the Helsinki Final Act. Prioritising participation in the Pan-European process to its disgruntlement about the humiliations in Belgrade, the Soviet delegation decided to stay on board of the CSCE, since 'the view prevailed that the European process is necessary and valuable for Soviet foreign policy'.²³

In the ensuing CSCE conference in Madrid (1980–1983) the multilateralisation of European security bore fruit. After the échec in Belgrade, where nothing was agreed, both sides had committed themselves to a less confrontational atmosphere. The conference nevertheless began in a climate of severe international tension, after the Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan in December 1979. Although this had sealed the fate of superpower détente, the CSCE still nourished European détente. It provided its participants with a platform for dialogue and thus formed an antidote to increased Cold War antagonism. Some Western leaders suggested opting out of the CSCE altogether, but those leaders 'didn't have an intimate understanding of the process of the CSCE', according to the Swiss ambassador Edouard Brunner.²⁴ The CSCE was after all intended to resolve such tensions rather than to shy away from them.

The spirit of cooperative security accordingly prevailed during the conference and a compromise seemed to be in the making between an Eastern European proposal for a disarmament conference – supported by *inter alia* the French and the Swedes²⁵ – and a Western proposal for more human rights conferences. Just before the document was approved, the Polish first secretary and general Wojciech Jaruzelski on 13 December 1981 declared martial law in Poland in order to put a halt to the increasing influence of the new Polish trade union *Solidarity*. Although recent evidence shows that the Kremlin did not support this measure,²⁶ Polish martial law was regarded as a gross Soviet violation of the Helsinki Final Act, and the conference was suspended for several

23 Yuri Kashlev, 'The CSCE in the Soviet Union's Perspective', DNA, MFA, Z238, p. 51.

24 Interview with Ambassador Edouard Brunner of Switzerland, in A. Nemcova (ed.), *CSCE Testimonies: Causes and Consequences of the Helsinki Final Act, 1972–1989*, Prague, 2013, p. 109.

25 A. Makko, 'Das schwedische Interesse an Vertrauensbildenden Massnahmen und Abrüstungsfragen', in M. Peter and H. Wentker (eds.), *Die KSZE im Ost-West-Konflikt: Internationale Politik und gesellschaftliche Transformation 1975–1990*, Munich, 2012, pp. 191–202.

26 'Document No. 82: Notebook Entries of Lt. Gen. Viktor Anoshkin', 11 December 1981, in A. Paczkowski and M. Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980–1981*, Budapest, 2007, pp. 454–55.

months. Archival evidence even shows that one of the reasons for the Kremlin not to invade Poland was to avoid violating the Helsinki Final Act, while staying on board of the Helsinki Process.²⁷ The dialogue was nevertheless put on hold, rather than abandoned altogether.

The ensuing situation illustrates the European commitment to the CSCE process: even though the American participants argued for hard economic sanctions against the Soviet Union, the West Europeans prioritised using the CSCE to condemn martial law over sanctions.²⁸ The CSCE thus facilitated a way out of the critical situation, further exacerbated by the introduction of martial law in Poland: it channelled the condemnation of martial law, while also pressurising Jaruzelski to modify the harsh effects of martial law, *inter alia* by releasing prisoners. At the same time, the CSCE platform facilitated the continuation of the dialogue with the Soviets and their WP allies. After eight months the process continued and all participants reached agreement on an important document, which paved the way for further conferences on human rights and a disarmament conference.²⁹ According to the American head of delegation, Max Kampelman, this was ‘a major stage-setter for the East West progress that followed’,³⁰ whereas his Soviet colleague, Yuri Kashlev, argued that it showed how the CSCE served as ‘the safety-valve for the hot-pot of international relations’.³¹ The CSCE functioned as such a ‘safety-valve’ exactly because it kept facilitating a Pan-European dialogue, even in times of crisis. Although superpower détente had perished in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, European détente had survived in the heat of the so-called ‘second Cold War’.

A ‘Common European Home’?

Despite the surrounding international tensions, the CSCE conference in Madrid was successful in several ways. The ensuing disarmament conference

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- 27 ‘Document No. 94: Transcript of the Soviet Politburo Meeting on the Crisis in Poland, December 10, 1981’, in V. Mastny and M. Byrne (eds.), *A Cardboard Castle: An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955–1991*, Budapest, 2005, pp. 456–461.
 - 28 D. Selva, ‘The Politics of the Lesser Evil: The West, the Polish Crisis, and the CSCE Review Conference in Madrid, 1981–1983’, in L. Nuti (ed.), *The Crisis of Détente in Europe: From Helsinki to Gorbachev, 1975–1985*, London, New York, 2009, pp. 42–51.
 - 29 Concluding Document of the Madrid Meeting, Madrid, 1983. Retrieved 25 May 2017, <http://www.osce.org/mc/40871?download=true>.
 - 30 Max Kampelman cited in A. Heraclides, *Security and Cooperation in Europe: The Human Dimension, 1972–1992*, London, 1993, p. 69.
 - 31 Yuri Kashlev, ‘The CSCE in the Soviet Union’s Perspective’, DNA, MFA, Z238, 30.

in Stockholm (1984–86) paved the way for the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty that was concluded between Soviet first secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and American president Ronald Reagan in 1987. Moreover, the follow-up conference in Vienna (1986–89) provided the reform-minded Gorbachev with an instrument to promote the new Soviet agenda of Glasnost and Perestroika within the framework of the CSCE, both against more conservative forces in Moscow, such as the military, and against less reform-minded Warsaw Pact leaders such as the Romanian leader Nicolae Ceausescu and the East German Erich Honecker.

The Vienna Conference accordingly marks a breakthrough both in terms of disarmament, with the Soviet delegation agreeing on mutual arms reductions against the wishes of the Soviet military, and in terms of human rights, since the Soviet leadership proposed hosting a human rights conference in Moscow. Although this proposal divided the Western participants, with the Americans being particularly sceptical, it was ultimately approved. The ground-breaking concluding document, which included a new section on the 'human dimension', connecting Principle VII on human rights to basket III on human contacts, and a far-reaching section on disarmament, thus anticipated the revolutionary developments of 1989.³² The head of the Soviet delegation, Yuri Kashlev, was even 'convinced that without the achievements reached in Vienna, communist regimes in Eastern European countries would have fallen much later'.³³ Soviet deputy foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze considered it a 'turning-point in East–West relations'.³⁴

The seeds for the Soviet reforms had already been sown earlier within the CSCE process, which had compelled previous Soviet leaders to make major concessions on topics such as human rights in order to continue participating in the Pan-European process. The Western introduction of human rights is, after all, less surprising than the Eastern European acceptance of those principles. The compromising attitude forged within the CSCE thus paved the way to the end of the Cold War at least as much as the Eastern European dissidence, which the Helsinki Final Act legitimised. The current historical narratives nevertheless very much favour the latter at the expense of the former.

The CSCE had officially become 'a priority sector of Soviet foreign policy',³⁵ which Gorbachev perceived as central to realising his ideal of a 'Common

32 Concluding Document of the Vienna Meeting, Vienna, 1989. Retrieved 25 May 2017, <http://www.osce.org/mc/40881?download=true>.

33 Kashlev, 'The CSCE in the Soviet Union's Perspective', DNA, MFA, Z238, pp. 32–33.

34 Shevardnadze cited in Heraclides, *Security and Cooperation in Europe*, p. 106.

35 Kashlev, 'The CSCE in the Soviet Union's Perspective', DNA, MFA, Z238, p. 31.

European Home'. Although Gorbachev's ambition to integrate both Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in a united Europe is not often associated with the CSCE, Gorbachev himself explicitly made the link. In his speech on 'Europe as a common home', which he delivered to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg on 6 July 1989, he specifically mentioned 'the Vienna meeting' (on the CSCE), which 'demonstrates that common views and common approaches do exist and can be multiplied', and proposed 'an all-European home as a community rooted in law', which 'suggests a doctrine of restraint to replace the doctrine of deterrence', while also referring to 'the Pan-European process' as having laid 'the groundwork' for 'the Common European Home'.³⁶

It seemed to make sense to overcome the Cold War divisions by including the Soviet Union in Europe through the CSCE. Gorbachev suggested cooperation in all the aspects that were covered by the CSCE, ranging from military terms to the environment, economics, politics, culture and human rights. In order to realise this Common European Home, Gorbachev stressed the 'urgency' of the 'need to convene within the next eighteen to twenty-four months a second Helsinki-type meeting'.³⁷ He accordingly hoped for a second CSCE summit in order to complete the building of the Common European Home.

Gorbachev's plans for a Common European Home were, however, eclipsed by the train of events after the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989. The ensuing 'Ten-point Plan for German Unity' by West German chancellor Helmut Kohl, which favoured integration in the EC, and the reunification of Germany in October 1990 eclipsed Gorbachev's vision of a united Europe. Despite all the promises to Gorbachev about NATO "not spread[ing] an inch eastward",³⁸ the absorption of the GDR into the Federal Republic of Germany and its indirect accession to NATO and the European Community, meant that NATO and the EC rather than the CSCE would become the instrument for integrating in Europe. The German chancellor's ten-point plan had outwitted the Soviet design of a new Europe, while leaving other statesmen in bewilderment.³⁹

36 'Europe as a Common Home', Mikhail Gorbachev's address to the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 6 July 1989. Retrieved 25 May 2017, http://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2002/9/20/4c021687-98f9-4727-9e8b-836e0bc1f6fb/publishable_en.pdf.

37 'Europe as a Common Home', Mikhail Gorbachev's address to the Council of Europe.

38 M.E. Sarotte, 1989: *The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe*, Princeton, 2009, 2014, pp. 107–115.

39 See for a very lucid explanation of this train of events Svetlana Savranskaya, 'The Fall of the Wall, Eastern Europe, and Gorbachev's Vision of Europe after the Cold War', in M. Kramer and V. Smetana, eds., *Imposing, Maintaining and Tearing Open the Iron Curtain: The Cold War and East-Central Europe, 1945–1989*, Lanham, 2014, pp. 335–353.

In order to appease the Soviets, Gorbachev was nevertheless promised the CSCE summit meeting he so much coveted. It took place in Paris from 19–21 November 1990 – a month after the reunification of Germany – and during the meeting all the 35 heads of state agreed on ‘the Charter of Paris for a new Europe’. At a crucial juncture in history, which should have been so momentous as the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, a convincing and alluring vision of a ‘new Europe’ was put on paper. Eastern and Western European politicians alike committed themselves to ‘a new quality of political dialogue and cooperation’ through ‘development of the structures of the CSCE’.⁴⁰ Moreover, the participants decided on the establishment of a Council of Foreign Ministers, a secretariat in Prague and a follow-up meeting in Helsinki in 1992. The Pan-European process thus seemed institutionalised. Commitment to the Decalogue of the Helsinki Final Act was reinforced and plans to deepen cooperation on economics, politics, culture, disarmament and the environment were formulated. Gorbachev’s vision of a Common European Home, as he had depicted during his speech to the European Council in July 1989, seemed to have materialised.

We can only establish with hindsight that history had already taken a different course and that Kohl’s ten-point plan and the Common European Home proved mutually exclusive. At the time politicians and scholars alike still thought that Gorbachev’s plans made sense. It appeared more feasible to unite Europe through the CSCE, which was, after all, designed to bridge the divide between East and West, than to do so through NATO and the EC, which were both products of Cold War antagonism. The CSCE indeed seemed ‘the natural framework in the continued search for a peaceful order in Europe’.⁴¹ It was considered unwise to exclude the Soviet Union from a united Europe, since ‘[i]n the long run, nothing would be more destabilising than an excluded and frustrated Soviet Union, which marginalisation under humiliating circumstances could drive to revenge.’⁴²

Russia at the Periphery of Europe

History tends to side with the victors, and the Soviet ambition to be included in the Pan-European process has ended up in the dustbin of history. It is,

40 “Europe as a Common Home”, Mikhail Gorbachev’s address to the Council of Europe.

41 Karl Birnbaum and Ingo Peters, ‘The CSCE: A Reassessment of Its Role in the 1980s’, *Review of International Studies*, 16, 1990, no. 4, p. 319.

42 Francois Heisbourg, ‘From a Common European Home to a European Security System’, in Gregory Treverton (ed.), *The Shape of the New Europe*, Council on Foreign Relations, 1992, p. 48.

however, important not to forget that ‘by design, Russia got bribed out and left on the periphery of post-Cold War Europe’, as detailed historical research has recently revealed.⁴³ The Soviet ambition for a Common European Home and the Soviet investment in the Pan-European process ultimately seemed to benefit most countries apart from, ironically, the Soviet Union itself. The follow-up CSCE meeting in Helsinki in 1992, which was meant to breathe new life into the Helsinki process, in fact buried it. After the Warsaw Pact had been dissolved in July 1991 and the Soviet Union had fallen apart in December 1991, the CSCE was about to be changed into the *Organization* for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The transformation from a process to an Organization with a fixed number of civil servants at the new secretariat in Vienna inadvertently stifled the dynamic qualities of the CSCE *process*, which was so crucial to dialogue facilitation. The most significant changes now took place in NATO and the European Union, which both absorbed one Eastern European country after the other, apart from Russia itself. Moreover, the OSCE’s first challenge was immediately too great: after channelling the Cold War in a peaceful direction, it was powerless in the face of the ethnic violence in (former) Yugoslavia.

The Russian desire for being included in the Pan-European process nevertheless remained. Professor Yuri Kashlev, the ambassador of the Russian Federation to Poland and the head of the Soviet delegation under Gorbachev, still referred to it on the twentieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act in Geneva in 1995. He emphasised that ‘the functions that the Russian and Western OSCE participants envisage for the Organization at this stage are somewhat dissimilar’, since ‘we in Moscow, attach particular importance [to] the development, above all within the OSCE framework, of a common and comprehensive security model for Europe of the 21st century.’⁴⁴ The Russians still hoped to continue the Pan-European process and to remain part of a ‘greater’ rather than a ‘wider’ Europe.⁴⁵ The Russian head of the OSCE delegation, ambassador Vladimir Shustov, reinforced the view of his Russian colleague, and stressed that ‘the Russian side are consistently for the strengthened OSCE. This is one of the cornerstones of our foreign policy’. He therefore emphasised the importance of the ‘development of a new security model for Europe (...), including the adoption of (...) a European Security Charter’.⁴⁶

43 Sarotte, 1989, p. 229.

44 Yuri Kashlev, ‘The CSCE in the Soviet Union’s Perspective’, DNA, MFA, Z238, p. 33.

45 See for the distinction between ‘wider Europe’ (e.g. EU expansion) versus ‘greater Europe’: R. Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands*, London, 2016, pp. 26–30.

46 Ambassador Vladimir Shustov, Head of the Russian Delegation to the OSCE, ‘Perspectives for the OSCE in Tomorrow’s Europe’, DNA, MFA, Z238, pp. 41–46.

The ensuing 'Istanbul Charter for European Security' in 1999 was, however, 'an empty text by Russian standards'.⁴⁷ The establishment of the OSCE as a pan-European security system was all the more important for the Russian Federation after the former Soviet states had become independent participants, which diminished the status of Russia, and its former Warsaw Pact allies were entering NATO. Regarding the OSCE 'as one of the backbone organisations in the Euroatlantic region', the Russian foreign ministry commented two years after the OSCE's last summit, in Astana in 2010, on its 'long and systemic crisis' and wished to see it restored to its original function 'as a unique platform for discussion of security matters'. It also recommended treating the OSCE as 'an International Organisation in its own right', since it is gradually 'losing its prestige and political appeal in the system of international relations' especially in relation to the integration of the EU and NATO.⁴⁸ This has remained the Russian position to date.

Since Russia is part of the OSCE's 'raison d'être'⁴⁹ and a valiant OSCE is essential to European Security, it is therefore important that it does not lose its appeal any further and that both Russia and the other European countries again become reliable supporters of the OSCE. The Ukraine crisis is in that respect paradoxically a missed opportunity: although it seemed to breathe new life into the OSCE, the subsequent exclusion of Russia from most international *gremia* (apart from the OSCE itself) defied the purpose of the OSCE. Some scholars even explained the Ukraine crisis in terms of 'the gradual breakdown of an inclusive pan-European security system, in which Russia could act as an autonomous yet cooperative partner'.⁵⁰ A multilateral European security dialogue, which is much needed today, can hardly co-exist with Russian isolation elsewhere.

In fact, the Russian appeal to breathe new life into the OSCE coincides with the appeal of the three foreign ministers to raise the OSCE from its 'sleeping beauty slumbers'.⁵¹ Both the Russian foreign ministry and the previous OSCE

47 V. Ghebali, 'Growing Pains at the OSCE: The Rise and Fall of Russia's Pan-European Expectations', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 18, 2005, no. 3.

48 'Russian views of the OSCE activities', The embassy of the Russian Federation to the United Kingdom. Retrieved 25 May 2017, <http://www.rusemb.org.uk/osce/>.

49 W. Zellner, 'Russia and the OSCE: From High Hopes to Disillusionment', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 18, 2005, no. 3.

50 Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine*, p. 31. Sakwa even draws on evidence by William Hill, the head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova in 1999–2006, who 'reveals how Russia was systemically excluded from being able to contribute to the resolution of the Transnistria issue' (ibid.).

51 'Eine starke OSZE für ein sicheres Europa', <http://plus.faz.net/evr-editions/2016-12-07/pjlfVTXSNNgvVyUcHiR5j2bo?GEPC=s5>.

troika – consisting of the foreign ministers of Italy, Austria and Germany – suggest placing the OSCE again ‘at the heart of multilateral diplomacy in Europe’ and reviving the Pan-European dialogue. The then OSCE chairman, German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, therefore launched the ‘structured dialogue’ at his closing speech as OSCE chairman at the Hamburg Ministerial Council in December 2016.⁵² In order to raise the profile of the OSCE and reinstall the mechanisms of dialogue from the Cold War, it is therefore important to draw a number of lessons from the CSCE – without regarding it in a Western triumphalist fashion – and to relate those to the current geopolitical situation. The following decalogue therefore serves both as a conclusion about the most successful aspects of the CSCE and as a recommendation for the future of the OSCE.

These ten principles, although drawn from the CSCE during the Cold War, all serve as recommendations for the OSCE, even though the current geopolitical context is different in a number of important respects. Europe is no longer divided into two antagonistic blocs, but Europe is not as ‘whole and free’ as it was intended to become in the Charter of Paris for a new Europe either. European integration can lead us to forget that there is a Europe beyond the EU. Russia is geographically part of Europe too, but its ambition to return to Europe in the last decade of the Cold War has ultimately led to its marginalisation. The division of Europe has simply shifted eastwards, together with NATO. The current situation is more asymmetric than it was in the second half of the Cold War, and therefore more precarious. Security still needs to be indivisible. This is, perhaps, less obvious than during the Cold War, but the Ukraine crisis has shown what happens if this principle is no longer respected. The multilateralisation of European security through the OSCE is the only answer to the current division of Europe. This can only materialise if all member states, East and West, prioritise dialogue facilitation over antagonistic posturing.

Ten Recommendations for the Future of the OSCE

I. The OSCE as dialogue facilitator

One of the CSCE’s most successful features is that it indeed functioned as the ‘safety-valve for the hot-pot of international relations’, since it

⁵² OSCE 23rd Ministerial Council, Speech by the Chairperson-in-Office and Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Closing Session, 9 December 2016, Hamburg. Retrieved 4 June 2017, <http://www.osce.org/cio/288066?download=true>.

facilitated a mutual dialogue between potential antagonists even at times of crisis. Especially in the heat of the second Cold War, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and during the Polish crisis, this was a crucial feature to maintain European détente. The dialogue with the Soviet Union and Poland was maintained, leading to the modification of martial law in Poland and the de-escalation of international tensions. As the world's largest regional security organisation, which includes all European countries as well as Canada and the US, the OSCE is in a unique position to act. It can only do so by returning to multilateral diplomacy.

II. The multilateralisation of European security

The CSCE turned European security during the Cold War from a zero-sum game into a joint venture. Matters ranging from human rights to disarmament matters were no longer solely and separately discussed within two antagonistic alliances, but primarily within the multilateral, Pan-European framework of the CSCE. Although Gorbachev's vision of a 'Common European Home' never materialised, prioritising the OSCE over NATO and the EU in security matters would facilitate a Pan-European concept of European security, in which *all* countries have a stake. This would also undermine the threat of a new bipolarity, in which the American president, Donald Trump, and the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, bilaterally decide on security issues over our heads. By multilateralising European security, European security could again turn into a joint venture,⁵³ without winners or losers, and the OSCE could serve as a dialogue platform again.

III. The OSCE as international organisation

The CSCE flourished because it was *the* platform to resolve international tensions. It was, accordingly, decided within the framework of the CSCE *not* to sanction the Soviet Union after the imposition of martial law in Poland. In order to provide the OSCE with more prestige, it should be recognised as an international organisation. Its charter is currently 'still under discussion' and the Helsinki Final Act still functions as its

53 Cf. 'Back to Diplomacy: Final Report and Recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security as a Common Project', November 2015. <http://www.osce.org/networks/205846?download=true>.

compass. In terms of decision-making on European security, it is eclipsed by NATO and the EU, which nevertheless do not include all necessary participants – e.g. Russia – to reach an agreement on European security with all the countries involved.⁵⁴ The OSCE can only be placed ‘at the heart of multilateral diplomacy in Europe’ and facilitate a Pan-European dialogue if consensus is reached on a charter and its prestige is raised accordingly.

IV. Respect for non-likeminded countries

Within the CSCE the Soviet Union was kept on board, regardless of major crises such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. All final documents were carefully drafted *with* Soviet and Eastern European participation. This not only resulted in Soviet concessions on human rights, but also in implementing Soviet proposals, such as the disarmament conference, which ultimately proved successful. The OSCE can only facilitate a Pan-European dialogue if countries with different political systems are involved in the diplomatic process, rather than bypassed. The emphasis should shift from changing the political systems of less democratic countries to establishing an equal dialogue with them, in order to reach common ground on European security.

V. Russian ownership

The commitment to the CSCE of countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain also arose out of their sense of ownership of the process. The neutral and non-aligned countries were included in decision-making on European security, the Western countries used the CSCE to introduce human rights as part of European security, and the Eastern European participants had proposed the conference. The Soviet Union also felt taken seriously. This resulted in commitment, even when it felt humiliated, as in Belgrade, and in a willingness to make concessions. A serious treatment of Russia despite huge differences could induce Moscow to a more compromising attitude. At the moment it feels it has nothing to gain, since it is treated as a ‘junior partner’ at best.⁵⁵ Russia is, however, part of the

54 ‘Russian views of the OSCE activities’, <http://www.rusemb.org.uk/osce/>.

55 ‘Back to Diplomacy’, p. 8 (‘The view from Moscow’). Retrieved 25 May 2017, <http://www.osce.org/networks/205846?download=true>.

OSCE's 'raison d'être',⁵⁶ and European security can only be reached in a serious dialogue with Russia.

VI. Cooperative security

The CSCE distinguished itself by a preparedness to cooperate and compromise on all sides. Thus, important agreements were reached on items ranging from human rights to disarmament. The Belgrade conference was a disaster because it essentially put the Soviet Union on trial. During all the other conferences, the East-versus-West dichotomy of the Cold War was instead transcended by searching for common denominators and prioritising the dialogue over East–West antagonism. The Russian Federation has embraced Steinmeier's initiative for a 'structured dialogue', but it claims that 'unless NATO drops its deterrence policy there could hardly be any progress', since 'deterrence and full-fledged dialogue are incompatible'.⁵⁷ The willingness to facilitate a cooperative security dialogue both *within* and *beyond* the OSCE is therefore crucial for the multilateralisation of European Security.

VII. Comprehensive security

The CSCE dealt with both hard security (e.g. disarmament) and soft security (human rights and human contacts). The Western historiography retrospectively emphasises the human dimension, and the Russians remember its 'hard security',⁵⁸ but its success resided in a *comprehensive* security model, in which the Eastern European emphasis on hard security was often traded for the Western emphasis on soft security. The OSCE has traditionally focused on soft security, although Steinmeier's launch of a 'structured dialogue' was accompanied by a 'strong commitment of the OSCE participating States to full implementation and further development of arms control agreements'.⁵⁹ It is imperative to continue raising

56 Zellner, 'Russia and the OSCE', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 18, 200v5, no. 3.

57 'Prospects of Conventional Arms Control in Europe', PIR PRESS, Moscow, 18 May 2017. Retrieved 4 June 2017, <http://www.pircenter.org/en/news/6917-prospects-of-conventional-arms-control-in-europe>.

58 'Russian views of the OSCE activities', <http://www.rusemb.org.uk/osce/>.

59 'From Lisbon to Hamburg: Declaration on the 20th Anniversary of the OSCE Framework for Arms Control', Hamburg, 9 December 2016. Retrieved 4 June 2017, <http://www.osce.org/cio/289496?download=true>.

the profile of hard security, to keep all members on board and reach a mutual understanding of European security in the wake of the Ukraine crisis.

VIII. Indivisibility of European security

Both the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe emphasised the indivisibility of European security, noting that ‘the security of every participating State is inseparably linked to that of all the others’.⁶⁰ Some IO’s, such as NATO, need to show more sensitivity of this concept by no longer emphasising some interests at the expense of others (e.g. Russia). The same applies of course to Russia itself. An illusion of divisible security (NATO vs. Russia) will lead to increased insecurity for all countries in Europe. A return to dialogue and diplomacy in the OSCE could restore the indivisibility of European security.

IX. The OSCE as a process

Part of the CSCE’s success resided in its nature as a Pan-European *process*, which ensured that the dialogue continued during times of crisis. It created a sense of commitment to European security on both sides of the Iron Curtain. The OSCE should also be turned into a diplomatic *process*. This tallies with the OSCE report by the Panel of Eminent Persons in November 2015, in which it recommends ‘a return to diplomacy’ by launching ‘a robust diplomatic process designed to replace mutual recrimination with rebuilding trust’.⁶¹ Such a process could restore the OSCE’s pivotal role in dialogue facilitation.

X. Summits

The CSCE was marked by its summits, namely the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe. Their thirty-five and twenty-year anniversaries, respectively, were celebrated in the ‘Commemorative declaration towards a security community’ at the OSCE summit in Astana in 2010.⁶² This was the last OSCE summit to date. To kick-start

60 Charter of Paris for a New Europe, Paris, 1990. Retrieved 25 May 2017, <http://www.osce.org/mc/39516?download=true>.

61 ‘Back to Diplomacy’, p. 14.

62 ‘Astana Commemorative declaration towards a security community’, Astana, 3 December 2010. Retrieved 25 May 2017, <http://www.osce.org/mc/74985?download=true>.

the process it is time for a new summit meeting, which will lend prestige to the OSCE, reinforce the commitment of its participants and facilitate dialogue among non-likeminded countries. The geopolitical context has changed since 2010 and it is time for a reset in Pan-European, multilateral diplomacy. We no longer have the luxury of merely commemorating the past; we need a new vision for the future.

Biography

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