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The OSCE as an Instrument for Security and Stability in Europe

A Georgian postscript

The Russian military operations into Georgian territory in August 2008 can be given many explanations, such as:

- . Provocation by the Georgian president
- . Response to the American and European support and encouragement of the independence of Kosovo
- . Warning signals to the many unruly political actors and tribes in the North and South Caucasus
- . Reaching the threshold of tolerance as regards the enlargement of NATO and perhaps also of the EU
- . Halting the energy pipeline project (independent of Russia) through Georgia, the Nabucco Project
- . Trigger happy action by the Russian Army, the regional command as well as by the military establishment in Moscow.

The answer is probably something of all of the above. In this context it must be noted that Moscow acted without regard towards the feelings and reactions of its Western neighbors and thus has created a political atmosphere which is not conducive to Western initiatives of engagement with Russia. To repair that damage will require creativity, something which has been in short supply in Moscow, and resolve, which has not been found in abundance in the West.

The Emerging Security Structures of Europe

In the early 1990s new political, economic, cultural and social structures emerged in Europe as reform swept away the hitherto prevailing socialist systems. Socialist states were replaced by nation states. Socialist economies were replaced by market economies. Rules of political expediency were replaced by the rule of law. The European Union altered character from being an introverted Western European free trade area into one of the world's largest political and economic structures. The new nation states of Central and Eastern Europe turning their backs on Russia joined not only the expanding European Union but the Western America-led

NATO penetrating deep into regions where once the Soviet Union had been the all-important and dominant military, political and economic force.

After 75 years as a Socialist Republic and a core component of a Soviet Union with an imperial reach into Eastern and Central Europe the Russian Federation has been facing the task of finding and re-define its identity as a nation state. In security terms the recreated Russia, when facing the West has no longer, as the Soviet Union once had, the comfort of a massive strategic glacis of allied States grouped in a system of identical sociopolitical ideas, separating it from challenges of a Western Alliance.

As the Soviet Union began the process of breaking up in the early 90s the prevailing expectations, -as expressed in the 1990 OSCE (then CSCE), summit document, the Charter of Paris for a New Europe- were that the reshaping of the security structures would be something of a collective undertaking with a central role for the OSCE, as an all-European (USA/Canada included) security organization, just as German unification would be realized in the context of an agreed common European security structure. But contrary to Moscow's expectations, the new united Germany quickly became integrated into NATO, an event that was followed by steady NATO expansion up to the border of Ukraine – with prospects of more to come. The result of that development has been a new division of Europe with Russia left outside the security framework defined by NATO and the political, social and economic structures constituted by the European Union.

Thus, it was NATO without Russia, not the OSCE with Russia, that became the structural base for the new security order. The politico/security impact of this was somewhat mitigated by the establishment of the NATO/Russia Council devoted to substantial consultations on practically all major European security issues. However gradually during the early part of this decade the Council turned from a body of consultations into a talking shop, at best for information sharing.

The Russian intervention in Georgia has been followed with a notable cooling of the relations with the Europeans and slowed the development towards a EU/Russian partnership. The consolidation of the extension of NATO and the long term prospects of further enlargement even outside the Balkan candidate States has added to a Russian isolation. Thus when Russia is looking westwards it can hardly find a single friendly state with which to develop a serious partnership. Add to this a renewed effort by the EU to strengthen its Eastern Partnership, that is to shape a special relationship with Russia's immediate neighbors to the west and inside a region which Russia is defining as its near abroad. To the east Russia has encouraged Kyrgyzstan to end its security cooperation with the USA and close the American base there, important for supporting the NATO operations in Afghanistan. These and other events have brought to an end the tentative development during the 90s to bring the nation state Russia to shoulder its historic role as a vital member of a community of European States from the Atlantic to the Urals.

President Medvedev's initiative, as supported by President Sarkozy, contains some opening as regards the search for an institutional approach for a European cooperative structure to compensate for the at least temporary setbacks of the NATO/Russia Council and of the EU/Russia partnership. Due to the initiative's all-European dimension and possible inclusion of the USA and Canada, an existing structure like the OSCE should be considered as a tool for structural security cooperation in the spirit of the initiative.

The OSCE as an institution has highly important qualities, frequently overlooked in the international security policy discourse. Its Permanent Council is a structure with capacity to react immediately and with equal rights of all participating States to events of security significance. The combination of a strong role for the yearly chairmanship, supported by a well lead and organized, economically lean secretariat with a sizeable field presence, makes the OSCE a flexible and effective instrument for conflict management. The OSCE institutions ODIHR, the HCNM and the RFOM bring unparalleled competence of respectively human rights practices (including election observation), conflict prevention and freedom of expression to bear on the developments in the OSCE area of responsibility. These institutions reflect a special humanitarian dimension of security which OSCE can apply over the area of its responsibility. In the field of military security OSCE (CSCE) created pioneering approaches to confidence building measures (early 1986 with the Stockholm Document and later with the subsequently developed Vienna Documents, now the Vienna Document 1999) which are superior to any corresponding arrangements elsewhere. The Forum for Security Cooperation provides a platform for cooperation in the military sphere. The treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE), though temporarily in suspension, negotiated in the context of the preparation of the Charter of Paris, is a unique creation with still untapped potentials for military stability and security.

To apply these tested structural capabilities to President Medvedev's important initiative would make possible a quick launching of a preparatory process for an all-European summit, vitalizing the OSCE and, even more urgently, create a foundation for the sadly missing dialogue on options in the strategic relations between Russia and the West.

It is high time to move away from outdated containment strategies, like expanding NATO, building missile shields without consulting Moscow and excluding Russia from cooperative policies in the energy field. Russia on its side should grasp this opportunity by abstaining from efforts to undermine common European approaches to strategic partnerships and from pressing and frightening its neighbors economically and politically, instead it should look for ways and means to work with the West on policies of a common neighborhood. There should be innovative steps to create joint projects for dealing with illicit trafficking, non-proliferation, arms control and environment. Without forsaking good bilateral relations with individual countries Russia should recognize the political reality of continuing policy integration in the West and not try to weaken and undermine such processes.

Energy Security

An OSCE-wide approach on energy security would add much quality to both bilateral and Russia/EU ways of dealing with a problem with growing significance and difficulties. Not only Russia but countries like Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan have significant energy reserves and Georgia is an important transit country for gas deliveries to the West. Russia's economic and trade relations with the West during the 90s, specifically with the European Union, were relaxed and not unfriendly, but obviously hampered by the serious problem affecting the Russian transition from a state economy to a market economy.

The skepticism towards Russia among several of the new EU member states added to the difficulties of creating a functioning and stable working relationship. With president Medvedev's initiative in mind, now is the time to explore the possibilities and potentials of an integration of the Russian economy into Europe's.

The starting point must be the matter of energy security. Here is a unique opportunity: on the one hand major producers and providers of oil and natural gas, on the other the world's largest and most affluent market of energy consumers. Does this not sound like a marriage made in heaven? In the energy field the EU and Russia should not behave like two scorpions in a bottle who are fully capable of harming or destroying each other.

Instead, what should be discussed and negotiated, is the creation of an integrated area of energy policy and energy cooperation. Russia and the other energy producing countries must be aware of and respect the consumer power of the European Union as much as the EU on its side must be aware of and respect the economic significance of the energy producing countries. If so the energy producing and consuming nations could start the process of forming a common energy strategy with the attainment of an all-European energy market in mind.

A prerequisite for economic and energy cooperation within the OSCE framework would be early and radical reforms in Russia to strengthen the rule of law and security for foreign and private investors, as intimated by president Medvedev during his first day in office. As much as a joint energy strategy is arrived at, Russia and other energy producers must unconditionally abstain from expressing displeasure with individual governments by cutting off supply of natural gas.

New Military Structures

With the end of the Soviet Union, Russian conventional armed forces fell into disarray. The defence industry was not capable of maintaining production level and technical quality. That fact, and the changes of the security environment, made military reform a necessity. Ground forces had to be substantially reduced. The conflict in Chechnya was further exhausting military resources. A decision to give priority to the maintenance of strategic forces and a policy to set aside large sums for the retirement and housing of the officer corps led to a draining of resources for ground forces. As a consequence, Russia now has only limited conventional operational capability. According to data from Russian security policy

institutions, only about one fifth of the country's conventional weapons and weapons systems are deemed modern, as compared to almost three quarters of NATO weapons and weapons systems. At current armaments trends, within 8 to 10 years Russia's conventional forces will correspond to no more than the forces of a middle-sized European state. In addition, Russian forces lack a modern military doctrine, and senior military figures appear unwilling or unable to develop new thinking in this respect. The refusal to accept democratic or civilian control of the military creates a distinct lack of transparency in the use and disposition of funds set aside for conventional forces.

Russia has not been able to maintain serious conventional forces to shore up its borders with the West. Now, however, with growth in the Russian economy generated by high-priced gas exports, the moment for replenishment of the armed forces is coming. This creates an opportunity for genuine renewal and rethinking of the contemporary role of the Russian army. Of course, the unruly and unstable situation in the North Caucasus, and the continued tensions in the Georgian context, will require that most of the limited modern equipment, as well as training for operational tasks, are concentrated towards the south.

Now the Russian Federation is in the happy situation of having no military threat at its western borders. It is the first time in the long history of Russia that such a situation has arisen. And that provides Russia and its political leadership with a unique opportunity to give a new direction to its security policy and to carry out a truly radical reform of its conventional forces. Russia can look to NATO and notice that this alliance, though it has moved closer to its territory, is gradually changing from a purely military alliance into something of a political alliance with no threatening ambition in the direction of Russia. NATO's military operations have been redirected towards new horizons, its forces increasingly equipped, trained and deployed for peace-keeping and conflict management, rather than wars in Europe. NATO forces are not structured and organized for a major armed conflict in Central Europe. Therefore the Russian armed forces should no longer need to prepare for offensive or defensive tasks in the European theatre.

A closer look at the way NATO and the EU have structured their forces and formulated new tasks for the purpose of peace-keeping and conflict- and crisis-management could be both reassuring and serving as models for the renewal of the Russian armed forces. OSCE could provide not only a political and diplomatic framework but the organizational tools for cooperation with the West when the necessary reformation and rebuilding of the Russian military forces are to take place. Thus the equipment and training of the forces could be organized in ways which would make possible joint operations with the West under UN Security Council or OSCE mandates. Command, control, communications and intelligence (C3I systems) of the Russian armed forces could be structured to alleviate cooperation with the Europeans as regards development of equipment and technology. Joint military exercises could be carried out in the context of the OSCE military-to-military contacts as developed in the Vienna Document 1999.

A radical but feasible approach could be more than mere cooperation, namely initiation of steps to gradually integrate Russian peace-keeping and crisis management forces into corresponding European forces, thus making these capabilities truly multinational and able to carry out multilateral peace-missions. This would mean that Russia, just as it begins to restructure its armed forces for future tasks, would be invited to forego the return to a large scale, heavily equipped war-machine, trained and deployed for offensive operations. This departure from old-fashioned and stereotypical security-thinking would open the road to completely new relationships in Europe, both in security terms and in the broader context of global economy. The organizational framework for testing and realizing such approaches should obviously be the well equipped but underused OSCE structures. The end of the suspension of the implementation of the CFE-treaty should be a central element on the agenda for the renewal of a European security order as well as a revisiting to the Vienna Document 1999. The early warning components of the Vienna Document could be elaborated upon to be applicable on regional security situations. Another early warning initiative could be timely announcements of launches of anti-missile defences, this as example, but negotiations could help to identify other concrete measures in the context of joint clarifying of policy objectives.

Conflict Prevention

The three previous chapters, The Emerging Security Structures, The Military Dimension and The Energy Security Structures constitute together a discussion of elements of Grand Strategy for Europe, but what should also be kept in mind is that contemporary conflicts, whether in the OSCE area or Africa, are geographically limited and driven by regional, even local forces. Last year's break out of the Georgian conflict is an example, as indicated in the beginning. Obviously the regional character of a conflicts does not prevent that they can have political and security repercussions outside the immediate area of conflict. If we reflect upon the violent conflicts in the OSCE area during the last twenty years, we find that they are first and foremost generated out of tensions and friction between ethnic groups, or out of majority/minority situations. This is confirmed as regards the bulk of the over 200 wars witnessed since World War II, which were not international but internal armed conflicts.

When the Soviet Union and the Yugoslav Federation were dissolved new states were emerging, defining themselves in various ways as market economies (liberal or democratic), but without exception with one unifying theme, namely as nation states. The ethnic and religious majority came to constitute the identity of each one of the new states. These changes of identity did not happen without pain. All over the former Soviet and Yugoslav space there were outbreaks of regional violence. The common denominator for the regional violence was the tension and hatred between the majorities and minorities within the now emerging independent nation states. The borders of the new states, inherited from federative structures, had been frequently drawn to cut through the habitat and geographic ethnicity of the nations. When the defining structures of the former republics of the Soviet Union and the Yugoslav Federation turned into nation states, the majority/minority situations, further influenced by nationalistic and security interests of neighbouring kin states, were transformed into tensions,

frequently growing into violent confrontations and atrocities. The Balkan wars, and the many conflicts in South Caucasus and Central Asia became tragic examples of ethnic cleansing.

Belonging to one specific nationality meant an opportunity to lay claim on territory, a country, provided history and size of nations coincided to make this possible. The alternative to settle for minority status within a state and adjust to realities of minority life challenged with regard to language, education, history, participation in governance and self realization.

From these findings and experiences of recent history of Europe the conclusion must be that if new conflicts with a potential of genocide are to be prevented the international efforts should be focused on addressing inter-ethnic problems and majority/minority relations. Long term structural prevention of conflicts depends on a number of factors, including economic stability, inter-ethnic integration and a society based on law and respect for human rights. Obviously the main onus for creating such conditions rests with individual states. They must within their borders foster an environment and political structure that is representative and pluralistic, that allows for equal opportunities and protects and promotes the rights of all citizens and residents. However, the international community must provide the normative framework, and encourage and engage states to address inter-ethnic and inter-religious tensions at local and national levels.

The OSCE is uniquely placed to assist in prevention of the conflicts just described. No other international organization is so well represented, organized and structured in the field for preventive work in the new nation states. And with the institution of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, created in 1992, the OSCE has acquired a mechanism designed for working inside states on issues of majority/minority relations, with the specific task of preventing outbreak of violent conflict. As a way to make this engagement inside a state tolerable from the point of view of respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty the HCNM is mandated to work confidentially.. Since the outset the HCNM has operated all over the OSCE area without any break of confidence of the OSCE participating states. In his approach to majority/minority problems and tensions, the HCNM has normally to address the struggle between the minorities' efforts at self-assertion and the majority's determination to forge a national identity based on its own ethnic, religious and cultural traditions.

It goes without saying that it is difficult to determine whether an absence of an outbreak of interethnic or interreligious violence in a given situation is a consequence of the successful preventive action of the HCNM or because of other factors. Still it remains that the HCNM's discrete work over now more than 15 years has had a considerable and positive impact on peace and stability in the OSCE region and that the unique institution of the HCNM has gained great international respect.

Finally, returning to the conflict in Georgia, it is worth noting that practically all security dimensions of the OSCE have been touched by the events that started in August last year, like emerging security structures, new military structures, energy security, and regional and local conflict prevention. This serves to illustrate that President Medvedev's proposal has a

most interesting conformity with the OSCE and its potentials. It is now time to draw the right conclusions.