

## THE ORGANISATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE OF THE “BALZAC AGE”

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There were no big festivities organised on 1 August 2005 to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Helsinki Process and at the same time of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which now has 55 members. No summits have been held since the OSCE's 1999 Istanbul Summit, some of the decisions of which have not been implemented so far.

The OSCE started its fourth decade experiencing some difficult times. Some countries are accusing the OSCE for its allegedly double standards and interference with internal affairs of other countries. Prior to leaving for Brussels, former Russian Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Chizov, known in Lithuania for his controversial remarks on the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, described the situation in the Organisation as follows: if the OSCE is not reformed in the short run, it shall “simply have no future.”

Is the OSCE going through a “midlife crisis”? Or maybe it was struck with paralysis of *raison d'être* and goals, just like many other organisations from the Cold War period? Or maybe the OSCE was drawn into a whirl of geopolitical games against its own will with somebody persistently trying to weaken this international institution having quite an influence on democratic development of states? Is the OSCE still of strategic importance for Europe?

Former Polish Foreign Minister Prof. Adam Rotfeld claims that by initiating the Helsinki Process three decades ago the Soviet Union sought not only to consolidate its political influence and territorial control but also to le-

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galise the single-party system in countries dominated by the Soviets. Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger shared similar thoughts. According to Kissinger, the Soviet leaders most probably hoped that the newly created structure – the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) – would weaken NATO or even strip the Alliance of its significance.

However, these hopes did not come true. Contrary to the aspiration of the Soviet Union, the OSCE not only stirred the foundations of the totalitarian system but also provided the conference members with a vote in solving political issues of Eastern Europe.” One of the activities chosen by the OSCE was the protection of human rights, which led to the establishment of human rights protection groups of the Helsinki Charter in Russia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Armenia and Czechoslovakia, and the rise of the *Solidarnosc* Movement in Poland. Many factors destined the erosion of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Warsaw Pact. However, Prof. Rotfeld has no doubts that decisions made in Helsinki in 1975 “played the role of the catalyst.”

The Lithuanian emigration was not unanimous in assessing the Helsinki Process. However, it did not miss the chance to use the events of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe to demand the continuation of the policy of not recognising the Soviet occupation of the Baltic States. In these events it was publicly spoken on human rights violations in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

Lithuania made use of the influence of the OSCE after the restoration of Independence. Once Lithuania joined this forum in September of 1991, it started demanding the withdrawal of the Soviet Army from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Paragraph 15 of the OSCE Summit Declaration adopted in Helsinki in 1992 urging immediate and complete withdrawal of foreign armed forces from the Baltic States was one of the major diplomatic accomplishments of our states.

Unfortunately, the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia not only liberated Eastern Europe but also opened way for conflicts in Southern Caucasus, the Balkans and Moldova. After a truce was called in South Ossetia, the Trans-Dniester region and Nagorno-Karabakh, the OSCE became actively involved in the political settlement of conflicts and post-conflict rehabilitation.

In 1995, the OSCE was transformed into an organisation covering the geographical region from Vancouver to Vladivostok. The OSCE established its missions in Balkan, East European and Central Asian states. The main goal of such missions is to promote mutual trust of nations and states, also democratic reforms and the development of the civil society. These goals are also shared by the Lithuanian experts currently engaged in OSCE missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Tajikistan and Georgia.

The OSCE Istanbul Summit held in November of 1999 approved (by consensus) obligations for Moscow to withdraw Russian troops and remove ammunition from Moldova and to reach an agreement with Georgia regarding the closure of its military bases in this Caucasian country. Almost six years have passed and the Russian troops and ammunition still remain in the Trans-Dniester region of Moldova. However, the dialogue with Tbilisi is showing the first signs of hopes of reaching an agreement.

The OSCE made an especially big contribution to democracy building by organising the observation of elections in “young” democracies. In 2004 alone more than 5,000 election observers from different OSCE member states, including 44 election observers from Lithuania, observed elections in different countries. In general, the geographical boundaries of Lithuanian “missioners of democracy” stretched from the Balkans to the Caucasus.

The OSCE had a memorable role in the recent events in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. Lithuanian and Polish presidents as well as the EU High Representative went to Kiev in the atmosphere of huge political tension at the end of 2004. They were also joined by OSCE Secretary General Jan Kubis. After reaching the agreement on repeat voting, the OSCE sent 1,372 observers representing 46 countries to Ukraine. It was an unprecedented campaign prepared in a short period of time. Provided assistance for a peaceful transformation of such crises shows benefits of the Helsinki Process, and strengthens stability and security of the trans-Atlantic area.

Over the 30 years the OSCE region has changed beyond recognition. The military confrontation of the bipolar world has been replaced with new dialogues between NATO and Russia as well as the EU and Russia. However, “dividing lines” of those times have not been completely erased. Some OSCE member states resent that they receive so much attention and criticism for insufficient progress in cherishing democracy, human rights and the freedom of

speech. Most of the severe criticism goes to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, which is in charge of the election observation missions and human rights monitoring in OSCE member states. The urging to implement a “serious and thorough reform of OSCE structures” and to review its “political agenda” is becoming louder and louder.

In this context, events that took place more than a decade ago come to mind. During the Stockholm meeting of CSCE foreign ministers the Russian Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev stated: “CSCE standards cannot be fully applied in the area of the former USSR. It is the post-imperial area in which Russia has to defend its interests. We are ready for positive work in the CSCE Council; however, we shall be cautious in considering initiatives that would permit interference with internal affairs.” After a pause the Russian Foreign Minister stressed that it was only “rhetoric” used earlier by those who lost to democratic forces; however, the political scientists still remember this woeful episode while analysing statements of Russian officials regarding Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and other neighbouring countries.

Presidential and parliamentary elections will soon be held in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and other OSCE member states. The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights will have to ensure the required assistance to these states in holding elections and at the same time to assess how the states meet the requirements of democratic elections.

Many politicians emphasise that the OSCE is experiencing a value crisis. They give different reasons for that – from the decrease of political solidarity as a result of the disappearance of the threats of the Cold War to the fight for the spheres of influence, the weakness of the member states, the lack of democracy, intolerance, etc.

On the other hand, all debaters agree that the OSCE is a unique regional organisation, the sole organisation that unites Euroatlantic and Eurasian areas. The OSCE is more active in co-operation with Mediterranean as well as Asian countries.

It is also agreed that the OSCE has unique experience in fields such as ensuring democratic elections and the freedom of the press, protection of human rights and minorities, the fight against discrimination, anti-Semitism and intolerance. The OSCE hasn’t abandoned its role in consolidating democracy in the Balkans, preparing solutions on the future of Kosovo province,

strengthening stability in Southern Caucasus or Moldova. The international community together with the OSCE will continue seeking the complete withdrawal of Russian troops from Moldova and Georgia according to the Istanbul 1999 OSCE obligations. The OSCE Minsk office works under conditions of self-isolation of Belarus and remains one of few international measures that protect and strengthen the civil society in Belarus.

The Helsinki spirit, especially its provisions on the promotion of security, democracy, regional co-operation, mutual trust and openness in the neighbouring countries, also is a part of the Lithuanian foreign policy. Lithuania, which took a lead of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Ghor province of Afghanistan, would benefit from the OSCE experience in organising free and democratic elections in Afghanistan.

Even though currently the attention of European and U.S. leaders is focused on the fight against terrorism, stabilisation of the Middle East, democratisation of Iraq, the future of the Constitution for Europe and the development of the EU institutions, the OSCE should also claim to attract greater permanent attention of politicians and public leaders. The reform of the Organisation must not be self-oriented. The OSCE reform must nurture the political will of the states to solve the key stability problems in the Eurasian region, especially the “frozen conflicts” in the Trans-Dniester region, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh, and to encourage democratic changes in our eastern neighbours and Central Asian countries.

Given globalisation and the fact of the changing structure of power and growing role of China in Eurasia, political scientists forecast new visions and objectives of future co-operation.

Maybe the implementation of these visions will become one of the objectives of Lithuania, a candidate to chair the OSCE in 2010?