

New Risks and Challenges within the Context of OSCE

Alexander Alekseev

Representante Permanente da Federação Russa na OSCE, Viena

Resumo

A Organização para a Segurança e Cooperação na Europa (OSCE) é um instrumento fundamental para a cooperação na região Euro-Atlântica no combate às novas ameaças que surgiram com os atentados de 11 de Setembro. Uma das principais tarefas da OSCE é a de funcionar como um instrumento de alerta precoce no caso de novos desafios e ameaças à segurança internacional. A organização pode ser um fórum onde se estabelecem novas normas e princípios de segurança e processos de cooperação entre os Estados. A luta contra o terrorismo tornou-se uma das prioridades da OSCE, e devido à sua experiência nesse domínio pode vir a ter um papel preponderante no âmbito das instituições Euro-Atlânticas.

Abstract

The OSCE is a fundamental instrument of co-operation in the Euro-Atlantic region on the fight against new threats after September 11.

One of its main tasks is the one of functioning as an early warning instrument towards new challenges and threats to the international security. The organization may become a forum, which contributes to build up new security norms, principles and co-operation processes among States. The fight against terrorism became one of the priorities of the OSCE and due to its experience in that field it may have, in the future, an even more outstanding role in the context of Euro-Atlantic institutions.

The theme of Seminar is of utmost importance for all of us and for the future of our Organization as a whole. OSCE's ability to play a productive role in global efforts to combat new threats and challenges will, to a great extent, determine the strategic choices of our Organization for years to come and its relevance in an evolving security environment in Europe.

The events of 11 September made us realize how vulnerable and unprepared we and our security institutions are to deal with a global threats of this new generation of terrorism. The lives of thousands of innocent people, buried under the debris of World Trade Center vividly demonstrated that these threats are no longer a product of Hollywood movie-makers' imagination but are a real and mortal danger to lives of all of us wherever we live; It demonstrated the reality that no State or Organization can effectively counter them unilaterally.

Overwhelmed by this tragedy almost every international institution, including the OSCE, began desperate, sometimes chaotic and overlapping, search for its contribution in the fight against global terror. Anti-terrorism becomes "growing industry" sometimes with no clear objectives. Obsessed by this truly burning issue, we do forget that terrorism does not exist in a vacuum but travels hand in hand with other threats of no less danger. To eradicate scourge of terror and to make the world a safer place, we need to address the whole range of new unconventional risks in their full complexity through a systematic and well-phased collective approach. The international community cannot sit on the fence and wait for new tragedies catch us off guard.

Over the last few years the Russian Federation has been trying to convince our partners to take the topic of new threats and challenges through different formats and international organizations, including the OSCE.

Role of the OSCE

We truly believe that the unique advantageous and comprehensive mandate of our Organization made it an effective instrument for cooperation in the Euro-Atlantic region in combating those new threats.

One of the principle role of the OSCE is to function as a tool of early warning in emerging security risks and challenges. So, the OSCE has clearly a role to play as a forum where participating states can exchange signals of early warning and could act as facilitator of solutions to problems through interaction of competent organizations: seminars and round-tables, possible focal points.

On one hand, the Organization can be effectively employed as a norm-setting mechanism establishing the principles and procedures of cooperation and making the national legislation in compliance with relevant international convention; on the other hand, it could be a provider of organizational framework for exchange of ideas and information, elaboration of specific programs and projects, coordination of efforts with other international organizations, etc.

The Organization could enhance the political awareness of pressing new risks at a high political level, thereby contributing to the creation of a favourable political environment for enhanced international cooperation.

Those of us who were involved in the preparation of the Charter for European Security in 1998-99 may remember the intensive discussions within the formal of the special working group “A” to formulate a language on new risks and challenges. A lot of fruitful ideas were suggested. Most of them remain relevant and might be successfully used in future work.

An attempt was made to identify and systematize the new risks along three main dimensions of security:

1) political-military

- terrorism
- proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)
- smuggling of components and materials of WMD
- organized crime and money-laundering
- drug trafficking
- illegal transfers of arms and “dual use” production

2) economic

- economic disparities
- environment and technological risks
- impediments to free trade
- social problems
- corruption and money-laundering

3) human

- intolerance, aggressive nationalisme, racism, chauvinisme, xénophobie
- uncontrolled and involuntary migration
- human trafficking

- ethnic tensions, violations of rights of persons belonging to national minorities
- anti-Semitism
- non-respect of rights of the migrant workers

It was a shared understanding that it is impossible to draw up a comprehensive, all-inclusive list of new risks and challenges. The dynamic nature of the subject precludes a static listing. The list should remain open-ended to be added as far as new threats emerge and are identified as such.

Unfortunately, the prevailing view at that on the eve of Istanbul Summit was that the study was too academic and lacking practicality with no “added value” for the Organization. An opposition to the idea of OSCE’s deep involvement in this topic, including terrorism, was voiced by a number of our European partners. Our U.S. partners were as well reluctant. We obviously were unprepared at that time to address the issue seriously. As a result, only a small portion of tabled ideas was reflected in the final version of the Charter. Most ideas, however, remain relevant and might be successfully used in future work.

New reality

A real breakthrough in the attitude of the Organization towards the issue of new threats and challenges took place after 11 September. The impact of that horrific disaster brought a new spirit of partnership and solidarity within the Organization and subsequent important practical steps in promoting inter-state cooperation in this regard. The issue of anti-terrorism became a central element of OSCE’s agenda. At the same time, an understanding grew that due attention should also be given to the over all issue of unconventional risks which, like terrorism, are not limited by national borders but concern absolutely all of us. We need to make OSCE well prepared, adequately equipped, and not to be caught off guard by them.

That is why the Bucharest Ministerial tasked the Permanent Council, together with the Forum for Security Cooperation, to develop a strategy for the OSCE to do its part to counter new threats to security and stability in the 21st century. The positive experience of the OSCE on anti-terrorism makes us confident that the Organization is capable of adding a substantial value on the topic of new risks and to some extent to play a leading role in this regard among other Euro-Atlantic institutions.

We have to admit that there are no obvious solutions or prepared receipts. This is quite a new sphere for all of us both in conceptual and practical terms. It obviously requires

systematic and collective approach, constructive inputs from other partner Organizations, exchange of ideas with others, including academic community.

We do not need to start from the blank page

Our Organization has already accumulated a number of valuable ideas in this regard. Besides the Lisbon and Istanbul Summit documents, conceptual ideas originating from above-mentioned Working Group on new threats, there is also a number of documents adopted by other international fora and bilaterally. May I draw your attention, for example, to the Russian-American Summit joint statement on common security challenges at the threshold of the 21st century of September 4, 1998. We just need to have them all thoroughly screened and see what is particularly feasible and applicable for the OSCE needs.

In this regard, I would also like to mention the draft on new threats and challenges to security prepared by the Russian Federation on the eve of last years' Ministerial (PC.DEL/ /741/01 of 05.10.2001). Unfortunately, this document was not given due consideration – lack of time or obsolete stereotypes may have obviously played a role.

Russian contribution

I would not like use this seminar for advertising this or that paper. New experience accumulated since Bucharest has obviously broadened our perceptions both of the nature of these new threats and of the best ways to tackle them within the Organization. Nevertheless, a number of ideas and basic principles of this document remain relevant and could be creatively used later in the work on OSCE new strategy.

Nevertheless, the paper mentioned enlists other “untraditional” threats in addition to those mentioned above such as crimes with the use of high technology, penetration of criminals into the information data banks, breaches of information security of the states. A cause of deep concern is an increased wave of radical right-wing ideology, political and religious extremism, national, racial, cultural or other forms of intolerance. They undermine the OSCE core values based on respect of human rights regardless of nationality, religion, face or social status. It is essential to take up some timely and well-addressed steps to label as illegal all organizations, groups or movements which participate in violence and terrorist activity.

Particular attention should be given to ensuring the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

All mentioned risks equally apply to all Participating States, regardless of historical, socio-economic or political backgrounds.

New threats and challenges to security – being complex in their nature – require a comprehensive approach based on solidarity, cooperation and partnership. The solution of those tasks should be based on full respect for the UN Charter, principles of the Helsinki Act and legitimate interests of all Participating States.

Cooperation between international organizations, including those of a specialized nature, should be based on the Platform for Cooperative Security. It will allow us to avoid competition and overlapping and will prove our Organization's ability to play its role as a link between global and regional security efforts.

Some lessons learned

The OSCE work on anti-terrorism provides us with some lessons on how to address other tasks as well.

First, declarations – no matter how good they are – can serve only as “public proclamation of war” against new risks, i.e., a formal start of the OSCE new engagement. But to solve the problem, declarations are not evidently enough. They should be supplemented by concrete Actions Plans, “road maps” and realistic timetables with clear and concise interim and final goals for each institute.

As in the case of the Bucharest Action Plan on anti – terrorism, each OSCE institute should receive its “piece of cake” in accordance with its specific mandate. For example, ODIHR could take care of a manifestations of political extremism and unconstitutional radical activity to monitor the organizations and movements based on nazi ideology and keep the PC regularly apprised of it. The Office on Freedom of the Media should pay attention to the use of mass media for inciting hatred, discrimination and provoking violence, etc. Similar agenda can be established for the Secretariat, HCNM, Parliamentary Assembly. Close day-to-day coordination with the Forum for Security Cooperation is indispensable. Of course, the key role should be played by Participating States.

Second, as long as all those risks concern all of us and are spread along the whole Euro-Atlantic area, the main burden of practical work should be laid upon the OSCE central organs and institutions under the guidance of the Permanent Council. It does not

certainly preclude the role for field operations. They should also do the job provided for the relevant request of the Host country and PC agreement on their project-oriented activity are in place.

The idea of “rowing missions” staffed with experts on specific issues deserves consideration.

Third, a creation of any new structures by the CiO or within Secretariat should be based on real needs and judged against its practical merits. Policy “first new office, staff and budget – then real need and substance” should be avoided.

Forth, a proper flexible mechanism for coordination of efforts with other Euro-Atlantic security institutions taken into account specific mandates of each of them should be considered as a priority. An invitation to discuss the entire spectrum of those issues with other partner organizations is worth looking at.

Fifth, a separate Seminar or a Workshop on new risks and challenges with a broad participation of OSCE academic community could be a positive brain-storming supplement to our thinking.

These are only some preliminary observations. I am sure much more suggestions and ideas will follow which will no doubt add to the common knowledge of our Organization.

High stakes

In conclusion, I would like to re-reiterate what was said in the very beginning. The stakes are too high. The OSCE is at the cross-road: whether it will manage to find its new political agenda in evolving European landscape to remain a key player or continue to lose its relevance, to be subsequently squeezed out by more ambitious self-motivated actors.

This topic provides the Organization with a unique opportunity to take a leading role in devising a new pan-European conceptual and organizational framework for collective efforts in countering new threats and thus to prove its future for Europe.