

OSCE Activities in its Three Dimensions

Daan Everts

Presidência Holandesa da OSCE

Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros Holandês, Haia

Resumo

O autor equaciona grandes questões no quadro da OSCE como, por exemplo, qual o seu papel futuro e quais as suas funções específicas num momento em que a UE e a NATO se encontram em processo de alargamento.

O autor refere quatro características que a distinguem das demais organizações: a diversidade geográfica dos seus membros; a possibilidade dos assuntos internos dos países-membros serem debatidos nas suas reuniões; o seu conceito de “segurança compreensiva” e a sua presença no terreno.

Existem também novos desafios e ameaças que justificam a manutenção desta organização: o terrorismo, o tráfico ilegal de pessoas, a imigração ilegal, as novas minorias e o desequilíbrio económico mundial, desafios a que a OSCE responderá com eficácia.

Abstract

The author outlines the major issues related with OSCE such as its future, what will be its role and its specific functions, in a world where the EU and NATO are in a phase of enlargement. The author refers four characteristics which distinguish the OSCE from other organizations: its geographical diversity; the open possibility for member states to discuss their internal affairs; its concept of comprehensive security and its presence in loco on the field of action.

There are new challenges and threats which justify the maintenance of the organization: terrorism, illegal traffic of people, illegal immigration, the new minorities and the world economical unbalancements challenges to which the OSCE will respond with efficiency.

It is a real pleasure and an honour to be in your midst and to be again in Lisbon. Now, I am faced with a little dilemma, because on a previous presentation a reference was made to my Kosovo experience and raised the expectation that I would share some experiences with you. I was not quite prepared for that as I had in mind to share some more general views. So, let me try to do both and bring also in some of the Kosovo insights, which are interesting because they touch on a lot of the subjects that have been mentioned in the earlier interventions. But let me, first of all, compliment the Institute on the initiative for this Seminar.

It is exactly midpoint in the Portuguese Chairmanship, as you know, but in a way it is also midpoint for the OSCE at large. A midpoint between a very successful past and an uncertain future, which has given reason for some self-reflection for the OSCE, if not self-doubt (some people even refer to an identity crisis). So, it is very timely to now discuss where we are as an Organisation and where we are going. In a way, you could say that the OSCE has been a victim of its own success because it has brought about near-miracles. To put it very starkly, and with slight exaggeration, I would dare to say that the Berlin Wall would not have fallen without OSCE, at least it would not have fallen as early as in 1989.

The big question now is: after that success of the past, is there any successful role to be played in the future? The environment has drastically changed. As you have heard, half of the OSCE members are becoming part of the inner world of the EU, while many of the same and others are part of the inner world of the expanding NATO. And even those who are outside are somehow brought into it into the realm of EU and NATO through stabilisation and association arrangements, partnership for peace arrangements, etc. So there is a widening world there that limits the space of OSCE as a unique actor in the theatre. The question then is, and I repeat basically what was said before, are there still problems that require an Organisation like OSCE to function? Which of course begs the question, what is so typical of the OSCE? Why would it be better equipped to tackle some of the problems than others?

If you ask me what is really the core of the OSCE, what makes it different and distinctive, then I would point to four unique features: one is of course the membership. It is Vancouver to Vladivostock, it has all fifty-five states and there is no other Forum that has that kind of an inclusive membership.

The second – not often mentioned, yet very special to OSCE – is that it is a platform for what I would call “peer-review”, meaning that States engage in joint ‘self-examination’. It is the only Forum that I know where an internal issue, or problem, or concern regarding degree of democracy or human rights is a concern to all members and can be reviewed and

can be examined and can be taken action on. That is unheard of. Just to illustrate, some of us were in Asia, in Bangkok, the other day (Thailand is a partner of the OSCE, like Korea and Japan). What was the most fascinating aspect of OSCE to our Asian partners was that it is an Organisation that allows internal developments to be scrutinised or at least reviewed by other Member Participating States. So that is the second feature, the peer-review.

A third distinguishing feature of OSCE is its 'comprehensive concept of security', which has been mentioned before. I just define that simply by the three dimensions that all are directly related to the security situation, i.e., the political military dimension, the economic-ecological dimension and the human dimension. Fourthly, there is the operational presence in the field, the Missions, a well-recognised asset of the OSCE.

So, restating the question, are there challenges out there at this juncture of time that would require this uniquely featured Organisation to act? I think the answer is very much yes. There are some old problems that still await a solution, original conflicts resulting from the breakdown of the former Soviet Union, that have been frozen for quite a while but do pose serious threats to overall security. Also, there continue to be legitimate concerns with regard to democratic developments and human rights in various parts of the OSCE world. But additionally there are the new threats and the new challenges that justify a continued OSCE role. And I will mention these briefly, not exhaustively, grouped in three clusters.

First of all, there is of course the new threat of terrorism and, generally, extremism. It poses threats to stability and security. So, do the alarming problems of trafficking and international crime. Trafficking is wide-ranging. It is trafficking of human beings, a particularly repulsive crime that is becoming a rapidly growing scourge of this world, of this era. You may have seen figures of anywhere between seven hundred thousand and four million people being victims of this new slave trade. Then you have the trafficking of drugs, a multi-billion dollar business directly affecting economics of States but also having a serious destabilising impact on society. And there is the trafficking of weapons, also an obvious threat to security.

A second cluster of new challenges, which are going to be a growing issue, comprises the illegal immigration and the new minorities that you see emerging in several societies, particularly in Western Europe. It is already showing its impact. You have seen the recent elections results in various countries, including my own. They are directly related to this issue, an issue that it is not going to disappear. In fact it is going to get worst if we do not handle this well - and humanely I may add. Related to this is the problem of growing intolerance in various societies, if not xenophobia. This is a typical area where we have to

act in order to not to let matters escalate. It has also to do with relations between civilisations, between cultures, between religions. So here is a whole area of understanding, of a need for understanding that is lacking so far and has to be addressed.

Finally, there is a whole cluster of problems associated with the growing discrepancy between one part of the OSCE world and the other. I am talking about the economic imbalance of those countries that are part of the EU or about to join the EU and those who remain outside. There are stark differences in the economic performance already, which may exacerbate over time if we don't address this imbalance. There is the risk and a threat of a great divide between maybe the bulk of OSCE-countries participating in mainstream economic development and those who are left behind or by the side. A new widening divide between a powerful, big EU block and the rest, between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' will pose real problems because it will create antagonism, tension and disintegration OSCE-wide.

So, briefly, my conclusion is that besides some old unresolved challenges there are huge new challenges emerging, already knocking on the door, that require an organisation structured like OSCE to act – and to act in all the three dimensions mentioned. By acting in these areas and three-dimensionally, the OSCE would also undo two flaws of the past. In two respects the OSCE has performed less than well and, to some of the Participating States, quite unfairly. One is that the OSCE has been mainly addressing issues in the Eastern side of the OSCE-region, in former Yugoslavia, Caucasus and now also Central Asia. It has left issues east of Vienna pretty much undiscussed. This was not much of a balance and even-handedness. Hence, by paying attention to the new challenges there would be hopefully a better balance with regard to the geographical focus of the work. The other imbalance that was manifested in the past was the almost exclusive focus on the human dimension, the human rights. Very important as this is, and certainly not to be belittled, it received rather exclusive attention and as such was criticised by the more eastern countries as unfairly one-sided. Some of their other needs, for instance, in the economical and environmental area, were not much attended to and quite neglected. The new era, the new challenges may help to bring a better balance between the dimensions and the way the OSCE addresses them.

Now since I promised you a little bit about Kosovo let me share with you a few lessons. There are indeed several important lessons to be learned from the Kosovo experience. Let me mention only two. One is that there is absolute need for international actors to structurally work together, to make a clear arrangement as to the division of work. In comparison with Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina saw far less of a properly structured

co-operation between the main international actors. As a result there was more parallel activity, duplication, sometimes even rivalry, with consequent waste of time, energy and resources. In Kosovo, from the start the design was to have one structure, UN-led, in which EU, OSCE and UN-HCR (because of the specific refugee problem) would work together. So, it was one building, with one roof, with very clear areas of competence. That made for greater efficiency in the post-conflict work and rehabilitation.

A second lesson in Kosovo – and that I think applies really everywhere and it has become extremely clear to me – is that rule of law, creating a proper climate of law enforcement in order to restore the confidence of people in state institutions, is essential from the moment one is in post-conflict rehabilitation. The emphasis often is – as you see again in Afghanistan – on military security, physical reconstruction and humanitarian aid. That is tangible and easy and something that is obviously needed. But if you forget the rule of law aspects and the need to establish a just, legal environment, you create great problems in due course. What will happen is, of course, that people, and we are talking undemocratic forces and criminals, are filling the vacuum. There will be lawlessness, there will be crime, there will be murder. All of this we have seen in Kosovo in the early post-conflict stages to an unacceptable degree. That was particularly due to the fact of not recognising from the start the need for proper law enforcement and restoration of the rule of law. It is a huge lesson to be learned and I am not sure it is being learned because, as you know, in Afghanistan there is again the problem to mobilise adequate law enforcement capacities. In Kosovo it took us two years to get adequate levels of international police and domestically trained police.

I hope, that I shared a few useful, general thoughts and gave you some insight into the Kosovo experience. Let me conclude by again congratulating you with the special occasion and thanking you for the privilege to be part of it.