

**Ethnopolitical Conflicts in Eastern Europe
and the OSCE**

An Interim Appraisal

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SUMMARY

Three levels or institutions have emerged as crucial within the OSCE framework for handling ethnopolitical conflicts in Eastern Europe—the Permanent Council made up of the OSCE Permanent Representatives of the currently 55 participating States, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and the long-term missions which the OSCE maintains in over a dozen trouble spots. The OSCE shows considerable success in dealing with ethnopolitical conflicts where away from its rivalry with the United Nations, NATO or the European Union it can set its sights somewhat lower — Chechnya, Crimea, the Baltic states, South Ossetia, Transdnestrria, Macedonia and Eastern Slavonia. Here OSCE has succeeded in transforming conflicts that have broken out and in contributing to the prevention of future conflicts. However, major conflicts such as Bosnia-Hercegovina or Nagorny-Karabakh appear to be too unmanageable for OSCE’s still embryonic structures with its insufficient military know-how and low acceptance among major partners.

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For the „old“ CSCE¹, the period between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the start of the Serbian wars for the Yugoslav succession as well as the implosion of the Soviet Union was too short to respond effectively. Not until the summer of 1992 when the Helsinki II document was signed with its decisions on strengthening CSCE institutions and structures, on establishing the office of High Commissioner on National Minorities and on early warning systems, conflict prevention, crisis management, and the peaceful settlement of disputes were the foundations laid for a “new“ and more responsive CSCE (called the OSCE since 1 January 1995).² From then on instruments emerged with which some of the negative effects of the interlinked processes of state collapse and nation-building in Eastern Europe could be stemmed.³ The CSCE tried to identify at an early stage ethnopolitical conflicts within the new-old states as well as the causes of wars between them so as to prevent such conflicts either with the means at its

¹ CSCE = *Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe*; OSCE = *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*

² On the „old“ CSCE cf. vgl. Wilfried von Bredow, *Der KSZE-Prozeß. Von der Zähmung zur Auflösung des Ost-West-Konflikts*. Darmstadt 1992; Alexis Heraclides, *Security and Co-operation in Europe. The Human Dimension, 1972-1992*. London 1993; and Arie Bloed (ed.), *The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Basic Documents, 1972-1992*. The Hague, London, Boston, MA, 1993; on the „new“ CSCE see Alexis Heraclides, *Helsinki-II and Its Aftermath: The Making of the CSCE into an International Organization*. London 1993; Heinz-Jürgen Axt, *Auf dem Weg zur kollektiven Sicherheit? Die KSZE nach Erweiterung und Institutionalisierung*, in: *Europäische Rundschau* 21 (1993), No. 1, pp. 83-99; Peter Schlotter, Norbert Ropers, Berthold Meyer, *Die neue KSZE. Zukunftsperspektiven einer regionalen Friedensstrategie*. Opladen 1994; and Arie Bloed (ed.), *The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Basic Documents, 1993-1995*. The Hague, London, Boston, MA, 1997; and on the present OSCE Victor-Yves Ghebali, *L'OSCE dans l'Europe post-communiste, 1990-1996. Vers une identité paneuropéenne de sécurité*. Bruxelles 1996; and Kurt P. Tudyka, *Das OSZE-Handbuch. Die Organisation für Sicherheit und Zusammenarbeit in Europa von Vancouver bis Wladiwostok*. Opladen 1997.

own disposal or together with other international partners. In areas where force had already been used, the CSCE tried to return the dispute to the negotiating table; and in post-war situations it offered its good offices as an intermediary for permanent peaceful solutions.⁴

Following a period of several years spent searching for, trying out, and rejecting a number of forms of action, mechanisms, channels and sub-committees, three levels or institutions have emerged as crucial within the OSCE framework for handling ethnopolitical conflicts in Eastern Europe. They are, firstly, the Permanent Council made up of the Permanent Representatives of the currently 55 participating States of the OSCE; secondly, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, who occupies a largely independent position within the OSCE's institutional framework owing to his broad mandate; and, thirdly, the long-term missions which the OSCE maintains in over a dozen trouble spots and which are linked through the Conflict Prevention Centre to the Vienna headquarters, the OSCE Secretariat.⁵ The coordinating and managerial authority for all these sub-divisions and sub-levels is the Chairman-in-Office, i.e. the foreign minister of the participating State currently occupying the chair.⁶ Since

⁴ Konrad J. Huber, *The CSCE and Ethnic Conflict in the East*, in: *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Report 2* (1993), No. 31, pp. 30-36; *idem*, *The CSCE's New Role in the East: Conflict Prevention*, in: *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Report 3* (1994), No. 31, pp. 23-30; Michael R. Lucas, *Minority Rights and Conflict Management: Developments in the CSCE and Their Inter-Institutional Context*, in: Gerhard Seewann (ed.), *Minderheiten als Konfliktpotential in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa*. Munich 1995, pp. 243-281; Diana Chigas, *Preventive Diplomacy and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe: Creating Incentives for Dialogue and Cooperation*, in: Abram Chayes and Antonia Handler Chayes (eds.), *Preventing Conflict in the Post-Communist World. Mobilizing International and Regional Organizations*. Washington, DC, 1996, pp. 25-97; and Stefan Troebst, *Das OSZE-Engagement bei ethnopolitischen Konflikten. Erfolge und Mißerfolge in Osteuropa*, in: *Internationale Politik* 52 (1997), No. 10, pp. 31-38.

⁵ Piotr Switalski, *Die Strukturen und Institutionen der OSZE*, in: *OSZE-Jahrbuch 1* (1995), pp. 385-397; Ettore Greco, *The Role of the Conflict Prevention Centre in the Security System of the CSCE*, in: *Helsinki Monitor* 5 (1994), No. 1, pp. 5-15.

⁶ Piotr Switalski, *Der OSZE-Vorsitz: Entwicklung einer Institution*, in: *OSZE-Jahrbuch 2* (1996), pp. 361-368.

this chairmanship changes every year and therefore continuity is only partially ensured, the Chairman-in-Office is assisted by his predecessor and his successor, with whom he forms the so-called troika. In addition, he is supported by a Secretary General, who is elected for a three-year term.⁷

The Permanent Council

The body in charge of the OSCE's day-to-day activities, which are largely centred on Eastern Europe, is the Permanent Council, formerly known as the Permanent Committee or the „Vienna Group“.⁸ The regular Thursday meetings at the Vienna Hofburg conducted by the representative of the Chairman-in-Office, informal meetings of this body also held weekly, problem-oriented contact, regional and other sub-groups as well as confidential circles and discussion groups on the fringes form the most important discussion, consultation and decision-making forum of the OSCE. The heads of the long-term missions, the High Commissioner and other OSCE officials regularly report to the Permanent Council. The Council decides on sending new missions and on extending and reformulating the mandates of existing missions. Participating States submit pressing problems among each other to the Council and discuss controversial issues. The Council also prepares and takes decisions and, above all, decides on the budget. The Permanent Council is thus increasingly replacing the once so influential Committee of Senior Officials

⁷ Pál Dunay, Zusammenarbeit in Konflikten: Der amtierende Vorsitzende und der Generalsekretär – Ein künftiges Problem?, in: OSZE-Jahrbuch 1 (1995), pp. 399-410; Michael Klor-Berchtold, Mehr Kompetenzen und Funktionen für den Generalsekretär?, in: OSZE-Jahrbuch 3 (1997), pp. 383-392.

⁸ Márton Krasznai, Beratung und politischer Dialog im Ständigen Rat, in: OSZE-Jahrbuch 2 (1996), pp. 369-378.

(since 1995: Senior Council), which now meets only once every four months. Within the Permanent Council there are formalized groupings such as that of the EU states as well as informal groups such as the Turkic-language participating States. Further centres of power and interests are the CIS headed by the Russian Federation and of course the transatlantic members USA and Canada. The smaller and neutral states come accordingly under strong pressure to side with one of these camps.

The High Commissioner on National Minorities

The office of High Commissioner on National Minorities, which is granted a comprehensive mandate and considerable independence from the OSCE's Vienna headquarters, has been held since its establishment at the beginning of 1993 by the former foreign minister of the Netherlands, Max van der Stoel. His activities, which he performs from The Hague, focus on containing rising inter-ethnic tension and preventing ethnopolitical conflicts in Eastern Europe through counselling, mediation and recommendations to the parties to the dispute.⁹ However, early warning to the Permanent Council together with early action as stipulated in the mandate are not part of his activities.¹⁰ As a rule all this

⁹ [Rob Zaagman,] *The Role of the High Commissioner on National Minorities in OSCE Conflict Prevention. An Introduction.* The Hague 1997; [Alexandra Rothenberger,] *Bibliography on the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities: Documents, Speeches and Related Publications,* The Hague 1997; Jakob Haselhuber, *Der Hochkommissar für nationale Minderheiten der OSZE,* in: Erich Reiter (ed.), *Grenzen des Selbstbestimmungsrechts. Die Neuordnung Europas und das Selbstbestimmungsrecht der Völker.* Graz, Vienna, Cologne 1997, pp. 109-177; and <http://www.osceprag.cz/inst/hcnm>. See also Max van der Stoel, *Die KSZE und die Minderheitenfrage,* in: *Europa-Archiv* 49 (1994), No. 22, pp. 629-635; and idem, *The OSCE and Conflict Prevention: The Role of the High Commissioner on National Minorities,* *Kompagnietor Lectures.* European Centre for Minority Issues, Flensburg, 10 April 1997, <http://www.ecmi.de>.

¹⁰ Chigas, *Preventive Diplomacy,* p. 51 (as footnote 4). Cf. also María Amor Martín

happens behind closed doors. Only some of the recommendations to governments of participating States have been published to date.¹¹ The High Commissioner is currently dealing with matters relating to the Greek minority in Albania, the Slovak minority in Hungary, Hungarian minorities in Slovakia and Romania and inter-ethnic relations in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. There are another five regional focuses, which are also covered by the OSCE long-term missions, namely the situation of the Russian-speaking population in Estonia and Latvia, the Albanian minority in Macedonia, the Serb minority in Croatia and inter-ethnic relations on the Crimean peninsula which belongs to the Ukraine. The treatment of Roma throughout Eastern Europe has now been transferred to the newly formed “Contact Point for Sinti and Roma Issues“ within the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights based in Warsaw which otherwise specialises in election monitoring in Eastern Europe.¹²

The current High Commissioner does not tire of sending two reminders to the Vienna headquarters: „Capital invested in conflict prevention is capital well spent“¹³ is one *ceterum censeo*, and “We must have an open eye for longer-term developments with a view to anticipating future crises and not only pay attention to already existing conflicts“, being the other.¹⁴ However readily Max van der

Estébanez, The High Commissioner on National Minorities: Development of the Mandate, in: Michael Bothe, Natalino Ronzitti, Allan Rosas (eds.), The OSCE in the Maintenance of Peace and Security: Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Peaceful Settlement of Disputes. The Hague, London, Boston, MA, 1997, pp.123-165.

¹¹ Cf. the “OSCE Documents“ column in: Helsinki Monitor. Quarterly on Security and Cooperation in Europe 6 (1995) - 8 (1997), as well as the chapter “Recommendations of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities“ with Bloed (ed.), The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Basic Documents, 1993-1995, pp. 649-829 (as footnote 2).

¹² Audrey F. Glover, Das Büro für Demokratische Institutionen und Menschenrechte 1994-1997, in: OSZE-Jahrbuch 3 (1997), pp. 349-358

¹³ Max van der Stoel, The Role of the CSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities in CSCE Preventive Diplomacy, in: Staffan Carlsson (ed.), The Challenge of Preventive Diplomacy: The Experience of the CSCE, Stockholm 1994, pp. 33-54, here p. 33.

¹⁴ Report by Mr Max van der Stoel, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. OSCE Review Meeting, Vienna, 4-21 November 1996 (REF. RM/71/96/4

Stoel is supported by the OSCE machinery and the participating States, the latter in particular are reserved when it comes to providing financial backing.

Another focus of the High Commissioner's efforts is setting international standards for policy on minorities. In the course of his four years in this post, aspects of language and education policy have gained in importance crucially in Max van der Stoel's eyes. In 1996 this prompted him, with the help of a group of experts, to „attempt to clarify in relatively straight-forward language the content of minority education rights generally applicable in the situations in which the [High Commissioner] is involved“¹⁵ and to publish them in the form of explicit proposals relating to the relevant legislation of the participating States of the OSCE.

Owing to their unofficial nature, most of the High Commissioner's activities are not subject to external scrutiny. However, the considerable international prestige acquired by Max van der Stoel through his OSCE work is unmistakable. This is clearly demonstrated by the reluctance of even his resolute opponents among the participating States to stand up against him in public.

The long-term missions

The now established term of missions of long duration or long-term missions (as opposed to shorter rapporteur missions and fact-finding missions) is misleading insofar as the missions at least *de jure* are not sent for a long period; rather, their duration has to be confirmed by the Permanent Council every six months. These

November 1996), p. 12.

¹⁵ The Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities and Explanatory Note. The Hague 1996, p. 3. Cf. also International Journal on Minority and Group Rights 4 (1996/97), No. 2 (Special issue on the Education Rights of National Minorities).

missions¹⁶, which usually consist of four to several dozen diplomats, army officers, lawyers, economists, journalists and regional experts of varying age, sex, religion, native language, ethnic background and nationality, are given varying and often very flexible mandates depending on the problem at hand, ranging from mere monitoring for early warning purposes and preventive diplomacy to conflict management, mediation efforts and settlement of disputes. In addition, according to the Swedish Chairman-in-Office of 1992, Margareta af Ugglas, the missions are supposed to perform the following functions:

- “- to be an ‘ombudsman’ for aggrieved parties, to be at the receiving end when the parties need to lodge their complaints about those wielding power, locally or nationally
- to be the political antennae of the CSCE, picking up the first tremors of an impending political upheaval or military confrontation
- to act as an intermediary in arranging contacts between the parties concerned and external actors
- to become a trusted partner in a dialogue with the parties concerned and to act as an adviser on various issues
- to be a mediator, to convince the parties of the virtues, the outline and the details of a negotiated conflict settlement.”¹⁷

¹⁶ On the missions cf. in summary Herbert Grubmayr, Probleme und Schwierigkeiten der Langzeitmissionen der OSZE, in: OSZE-Jahrbuch 4 (1998), pp. 237-254; Allan Rosas, Timo Lahelma, OSCE Long-Term Missions, in: Bothe, Ronzitti, Rosas (eds.), The OSCE in the Maintenance of Peace and Security, pp. 167-190 (as footnote 10); Stefan Troebst, “Dicke Bretter, schwache Bohrer“. Die Langzeitmissionen der OSZE, in: Dieter Senghaas (ed.), Frieden machen. Frankfurt/Main 1997, pp. 147-165; and I. Tersman, Small Steps in the Right Direction: A report on the CSCE Long-term Missions, Working Paper, National Defence Research Establishment. Stockholm 1994.

¹⁷ Margareta af Ugglas, Conditions for Successful Preventive Diplomacy, in: Carlsson (ed.), The Challenge of Preventive Diplomacy, pp. 11-32, here p. 23 (as footnote 13).

The first two missions were sent in September 1992 to the Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). Whereas the *CSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* (presently called the *OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje*) remains in force to this day, seeking to achieve a settlement between the majority population and the sizeable Albanian minority¹⁸, the *CSCE Missions of Long Duration to Kosovo, Sanjak and Vojvodina* had to leave their operational areas in July 1993 because the Belgrade authorities refused to extend the visas of mission members.¹⁹ In February, High Commissioner Max van der Stoep has been nominated Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office for Kosovo. He managed to visit Kosovo only once, in February 1998, and that not in his official but his private capacity.²⁰ As a result of the Drenica massacre committed by Serbian security forces against Albanian civilians in March 1998, the new Polish Chairman appointed Felipe González as new Personal Representative for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia including Kosovo. Owing to Belgrade's refusal to cooperate he, too, has not been able to fulfil his mandate.²¹

¹⁸ Cf. Giorgio Blais, Experiences with the CSCE Monitoring in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in: Jürgen Altmann et al. (eds.), *Verification after the Cold War: Broadening the Process*. Amsterdam 1994, p. 302; Stefan Troebst, Präventive Friedenssicherung durch internationale Beobachtermissionen? Das Beispiel der KSZE-Spillover-Monitormission in Makedonien 1992-1993, in: Seewann (ed.), *Minderheiten als Konfliktpotential*, pp. 282-331 (as footnote 4); Alice Ackermann, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: A Relatively Successful Case of Conflict Prevention in Europe, in: *Security Dialogue* 27 (1996), pp. 409-424; eadem, Die Republik Mazedonien und die OSZE, in: *OSZE-Jahrbuch* 3 (1997), pp. 73-80.

¹⁹ Franklin de Vrieze, Kosovo: Stable and Explosive, in: *Helsinki Monitor* 6 (1995), No. 2, pp. 43-51; Veniamin Karakostanoglu, The Ethnic Conflict in Kosovo: A Test Case for International Borders?, in: Heinz-Jürgen Axt (ed.), *Beiträge zur Stabilisierung Südosteuropas aus deutscher und griechischer Sicht*. Munich 1995, pp. 152-163; Ghebali, L'OSCE dans l'Europe (as footnote 2), pp. 391-402; Marcus Wenig, Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Streitbeilegung ethnischer Konflikte durch die OSZE, dargestellt am Konflikt im ehemaligen Jugoslawien. Berlin 1996, pp. 245-248; and Predrag Simić, Die OSZE und die Bundesrepublik Jugoslawien, in: *OSZE-Jahrbuch* 3 (1997), pp. 81-92.

²⁰ Arie Bloed, The OSCE response to conflicts in the region, in: *Helsinki Monitor* 8 (1997), No. 2, pp. 49-55, here pp. 50-51.

²¹ Stefan Troebst, Conflict in Kosovo: Failure of Prevention? An Analytical

Since 1992 the number of long-term missions has multiplied. The OSCE is currently maintaining missions in Georgia, Moldova and the Ukraine, which focus on the crisis regions of South Ossetia, Transdniestria and the Crimea, as well as in Estonia and Latvia where the emphasis is on the large Russian-speaking portion of the residential population, in Tajikistan where the main issues are conflict resolution and the building of a civil society, and since 1996 in Croatia with its Serb minority especially in Baranja and western Sirmia.²² A special case is the mission to Grozny tolerated with reluctance at first by the Russian Federation, which allowing for Moscow's sensitivities operates under the official title of *OSCE Assistance Group to Chechnya*. The same is true of the *OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus* sent to Minsk at the end of 1997.²³ The huge mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina comprising several hundred members, which was sent in the wake of the Dayton Agreement and swallows up almost half of the OSCE's total budget, is very much out of the ordinary.²⁴ And an even larger mission comprising several thousand military observers for monitoring the Armenian-Azerbaijani ceasefire in Nagorny-Karabakh has been

Documentation, 1989-1998. Flensburg 1998, pp. 26-32 (= ECMI Working Papers, 1); Jens Reuter, Kosovo 1998, in: OSZE-Jahrbuch 4 (1998), pp. 203-214.

²² Joachim Eicher, Die OSZE-Mission in Kroatien, in: OSZE-Jahrbuch 3 (1997), pp. 193-200; idem, Die OSZE-Mission in Kroatien — Erfahrungen, Probleme, Perspektiven, in: Südosteuropa-Mitteilungen 38 (1998), No. 1, pp. 10-22; Elena Drozdik, Das schwierige Geschäft mit der Wahrnehmung — OSZE-Beobachter in Kroatien, in: OSZE-Jahrbuch 4 (1998), pp. 215-222.

²³ Green Light for Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus, in: OSCE Newsletter, vol. 4, no. 9, September 1997, p. 7; Heinz Timmermann, Die OSZE-Vertretung in Belarus, in: OSZE-Jahrbuch 4 (1998), pp. 223-236.

²⁴ Robert F. Frowick, Die OSZE-Mission in Bosnien und Herzegowina, in: OSZE-Jahrbuch 2 (1996), pp. 163-176; Peter Hazdra, Die OSZE-Mission in Bosnien-Herzegowina, in: Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift 6 (1996), pp. 695-699; Marie-Janine Calic, Der Beitrag der OSZE zur Demokratisierung Bosnien-Herzegowinas, in: OSZE-Jahrbuch 3 (1997), pp. 143-156; special issue "The OSCE in Bosnia and Herzegovina", Helsinki Monitor 8 (1997), No. 3; and Ed van Thijn, Stemmingen in Sarajevo. Dagboek van een Waarnemer. Amsterdam 1997. See also Carsten Giersch, Konfliktregulierung in Jugoslawien 1991-1995. Die Rolle von OSZE, EU, UNO und NATO. Baden-Baden 1998.

at the planning stage for five years now.²⁵

To date, none of the missions sent since 1992 have been recalled, even though the governments of such host countries as Estonia, the Ukraine and Macedonia are urging this, because they feel stigmatised by the continued presence of an OSCE mission with the considerable loss of sovereignty that this entails. Also from the OSCE's point of view, no mission mandate has been permanently realized to date. Here the OSCE finds itself trapped by its own flexibility: all the mandates are formulated so broadly that virtually any risk to the internal or external security of the host country can constitute grounds for the mission's activities. This also means that it is difficult to fulfil and complete the mandate.

However, this very elasticity of the mandate ensures the considerable success of the missions, even though spectacular breakthroughs are very rare indeed. For instance, in Chechnya the OSCE's efforts helped bring about a ceasefire under very trying conditions²⁶, and in Georgia the South Ossetia problem has been if not eliminated then at least contained.²⁷ The mission to Macedonia, a country

²⁵ Terbi Hakala, *The OSCE Minsk Process: A balance after five years*, in: *Helsinki Monitor* 9 (1998), No. 1, pp. 5-14; Rexane Dedashti, *Nagorno-Karabakh: A Case-Study of OSCE Conflict Settlement*, in: Bothe, Ronzitti, Rosas (eds.), *The OSCE in the Maintenance of Peace and Security*, pp. 459-477 (as footnote 10); Irina Busygina, *The OSCE in Chechnya*, in: S. Neil MacFarlane, Oliver Thränert (eds.), *Balancing Hegemony: The OSCE in the CIS*. Kingston, Ontario, 1997, pp. 115-129; Thomas Engelke, *Der Karabach-Konflikt im geopolitischen Kontext des Krisen- und Konfliktmanagements der OSZE*. Frankfurt/M. 1997; Michael Michalka, *A Marriage of Convenience: The OSCE and Russia in Nagorny-Karabakh and Chechnya*, in: *Helsinki Monitor* 7 (1996), No. 2, pp. 13-28; and Helmut W. Ganser, *Die Bemühungen der OSZE um eine Beilegung des Konfliktes um Berg-Karabach*, in: *OSZE-Jahrbuch* 1 (1995), pp. 187-191.

²⁶ Elfie Siegel, *Wir haben nichts mehr zu verlieren. Alltag im zerbombten Grosny*, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* No. 198 of 26 August 1995, "Bilder und Zeiten" supplement; István Gyarmati, *Die ungarische Vorsitz und der Tschetschenien-Konflikt*, in: *OSZE-Jahrbuch* 2 (1996), pp. 177-188; Ursel Schlichting, *Das Engagement der OSZE in Tschetschenien*, in: *OSZE-Jahrbuch* 1 (1995), pp. 211-220; Tim Guldemann, *Die Tauben gegen die Falken unterstützen. Erfahrungen der OSZE-Unterstützungsgruppe in Tschetschenien*, in: *OSZE-Jahrbuch* 3 (1997), pp. 133-142.

²⁷ George Khutsishvili, *The OSCE and Conflict in Georgia*, in: S. Neil MacFarlane, Oliver Thränert (eds.), *Balancing Hegemony: The OSCE in the CIS*. Kingston, Ontario, 1997, pp. 101-110; Friedrich W. Kriesel, *Die KSZE-Mission in Georgien/Südostetien und ihre*

which was subjectively under the threat of a Serb invasion in 1992 and objectively suffering from the UN embargo imposed on rump-Yugoslavia as well as from an economic blockade from Greece, was important in the absence of international recognition of the new mini republic at least until the arrival of an United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR, presently United Nations Preventive Deployment—UNPREDEP) as a “consolation“ in terms of promoting psychological stability and providing reliable information, while also serving as an early warning system and a stumbling-block for any potential aggressor.²⁸ The Moldova mission managed together with Russian, and more recently Ukrainian, mediation to bring the central government in Chişinău and the self-appointed “Transdnestrian Moldavian Republic“ on the eastern bank of the Dniester closer to a negotiated settlement.²⁹ The Tajikistan mission established an ombudsman office under the most adverse conditions³⁰, while the Ukraine mission made a crucial contribution to defusing the standoff between the central government in Kiev and the Russian-speaking majority in Crimea,

Zusammenarbeit mit den russischen Friedenstruppen, in: Hans-Georg Ehrhart, Anna Kreikemeyer, Andrej W. Zagorski (eds.), *Krisenmanagement in der GUS: Wohin steuert Rußland?* Baden-Baden 1995, pp. 179-190; Hansjörg Eiff, *Die OSZE-Mission für Georgien*, in: *OSZE-Jahrbuch 1 (1995)*, pp. 179-186.

²⁸ Troebst, *Präventive Friedenssicherung* (as footnote 18).

²⁹ Adam Daniel Rotfeld, *In Search of a Political Settlement — The Case of the Conflict in Moldova*, in: Carlsson (ed.), *The Challenge of Preventive Diplomacy*, pp. 100-137 (as footnote 13); Donald Johnson (Donal'd Dzhonson), *Mezhdunarodnoe posrednichestvo v konflikte v Respublike Moldove*, in: Valeriu Moşneaga (ed.), *Statul national și societatea polietnică: Moldova în anii 90. Materiale I simpozion moldo-german (Chişinău 13-18 octombrie 1996)*. Chişinău 1996, pp. 83-88; Rolf Welberts, *Der Einsatz der OSZE in der Republik Moldau*, in: *OSZE-Jahrbuch 1 (1995)*, pp. 193-210; Klemens Büscher, *Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der OSZE-Konfliktmanagements in Moldova*, in: *Ethnos — Nation 3 (1995)*, No. 2, pp. 71-84; Günte Joetze, *The OSCE Mission to Moldova*, in: S. Neil MacFarlane, Oliver Thränert (eds.), *Balancing Hegemony: The OSCE in the CIS*. Kingston, Ontario, 1997, pp. 133-141; Stefan Troebst, *Der Transnistrienkonflikt und seine Bearbeitung durch die OSZE*, in: *Afrikanische Perspektiven, Friedensbericht 1998. Theorie und Praxis ziviler Konfliktbearbeitung in Osteuropa*. Chur, Zurich 1998, pp. 347-379.

³⁰ Johannes Reissner, *As an OSCE Observer in Tajikistan: Conflict Resolution and Civil Society Building*, in: *The Iranian Journal of International Affairs 8 (1996)*, No. 2, pp. 454-459.

which escalated dramatically in March 1995.³¹ In Estonia and Latvia the missions helped stabilize the situation through partial reduction of the tension in relations between the titular nation and the Russian-speaking residential population.³²

A key to the relative success of the missions is their flat command structure and practice-oriented composition. Even the senior posts, that of head of mission, his deputy and, where necessary, team leaders, are not held exclusively by career diplomats but also by people from other walks of life. For instance, a French specialist in Oriental studies headed the mission to Tajikistan and a Swiss journalist the Ukraine mission. The language skills and regional knowledge of their members and the usually highly qualified local staff mean that OSCE missions are very well grounded as a rule.

³¹ Andreas V. Kohlschütter, *Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Präventivdiplomatie. Das Beispiel der OSZE-Mission in der Ukraine*, in: *Theorie und Praxis ziviler Konfliktbearbeitung. Friedensbericht 1996. 1. Jahrbuch für Konfliktlösung*. Chur, Zurich 1996, pp. 125-148. See also John Packer, *Autonomy Within the OSCE: The Case of Crimea*, in: Markku Suksi (ed.), *Autonomy: Applications and Implications*. The Hague, London, Boston, MA, 1998, pp. 295-316; and Natalie Michajlyshyn, *The OSCE and Conflict Prevention: The Case of Ukraine*, in: S. Neil MacFarlane, Oliver Thränert (eds.), *Balancing Hegemony: The OSCE in the CIS*. Kingston, Ontario, 1997, pp. 145-166.

³² Klaus Törnudd, *The Role of the CSCE Missions in Preventive Diplomacy — The Case of Estonia*, in: Carlsson (ed.), *The Challenge of Preventive Diplomacy*, pp. 73-86 (as footnote 13); Timo Lahelma, *The Role of the CSCE Missions in Preventive Diplomacy — The case of Estonia (August 1993-June 1994)*, *ibid.*, pp. 87-99; Henn-Jüri Uibopuu, *Die OSZE-Mission in Estland und ihre bisherige Tätigkeit*, in: *OSZE-Jahrbuch 1 (1995)*, pp. 159-170; Falk Lange, *Die Beziehungen Lettlands zur OSZE*, in: *OSZE-Jahrbuch 1 (1995)*, pp. 171-177; Jürgen Hübscher, *Für die OSZE in Lettland*, in: *Europäische Sicherheit 7 (1997)*, pp. 35-36; *Idem*, *Als "Einzelkämpfer" für die OSZE in Lettland — Ein Beispiel für die praktische Umsetzung eines sicherheitspolitischen Konzepts*, in: *Truppenpraxis 1998*, no. 4, pp. 216-219; Undine Bollow, *OSCE Mission — mis see on? Eindrücke aus der Arbeit in der OSZE-Mission in Estland*, in: *Berliner Osteuropa Info*, No. 7, July 1996, pp. 15-16; Beate Maeder-Metcalf, *Russische Minderheiten in den baltischen Staaten. Das Engagement der OSZE*, in: *Internationale Politik 52 (1997)*, No. 10, pp. 39-44; and Falk Lange, *Die OSZE-Missionen im Baltikum. "Schwestermissionen" und doch verschieden?*, in: *OSZE-Jahrbuch 3 (1997)*, pp. 111-118. Cf. also the evaluation of OSCE activities by Hanne-Margret Birckenbach, *Preventive Diplomacy through Fact-Finding. How International Organisations Review the Conflict over Citizenship in Estonia and Latvia*. Münster 1997, as well as the bibliography by Eadem, Boris Tsilevich, *"Russians" in the Newly Independent States: A Bibliography on Conflicts and Preventive Diplomacy*. Kiel 1998

An interim appraisal

„What is unique about the OSCE?“ Katherine Birmingham recently asked, pointing in particular to the combination of short-term crisis management and long-term conflict prevention. At the same time, she stressed that the OSCE’s tasks relating to ethnopolitical conflicts in Eastern Europe were more clearly defined than that of the United Nations and more practice-oriented than that of the Council of Europe.³³ Another essential element is that the OSCE is the only operational pan-European organization in which the Russian Federation is a full member. Thus, in Eastern Europe this governmental network stretching from Aqmola to Ottawa suffers less and less from the odium of a “Western Agency“. The rising number of Eastern Europeans at the Vienna headquarters, in the long-term missions and at the Hague-based office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities is also helping this trend, as testified by the gradual but steady improvement in cooperation between the OSCE and the Russian Federation in the CIS region.³⁴ Thanks to the constant presence and thus high visibility among the public, the authorities and the governments in the Eastern European crisis regions, it is the missions that stand for the OSCE locally and not the headquarters on the imposing Kärtner Ring in Vienna. Not least for this reason the missions perform functions beyond their direct and specific tasks in effectively conveying the values of Helsinki into the zone of tension between the EU’s eastern borders and China’s western border.

The now harmonious coordination of the complementary activities being

³³ Katherine Birmingham, *The OSCE and Minority Issues*. The Hague 1995, p. 40.

³⁴ Cf. Anna Kreikemeyer, Andrej V. Zagorskij, *Rußlands Politik in bewaffneten Konflikten in der GUS. Zwischen Alleingang und kooperativem Engagement*. Baden-Baden

pursued by the long-term missions and the High Commissioner with their clearly defined tasks as well as the routinely smooth coordination between the Chairman-in-Office, the Permanent Council and the Secretariat with regard to OSCE policy at local level, meaning in Eastern Europe's areas of tension, are greatly enhancing responsiveness and efficiency. However, there is some interorganizational friction such as that reported by the former head of the Ukraine mission, the Swiss journalist Andreas Kohlschütter, relating to the OSCE's management of the Crimea crisis in March 1995:

„Against the background of the Crimea experience, this [criticism] concerns in particular the weak points in the OSCE's *decision-making mechanisms* and *communication structures*. At the moment of the critical escalation of the Crimea problem they played a disappointingly weak role [...]. *There was no clear, coherent and coordinated leadership*. The OSCE signals that were sent out when the situation escalated in March 1995 were contradictory for a long period. Poorly defined areas of responsibility were as paralyzing and unsettling as the frequent and long absences of *indispensable* OSCE decision-makers. At this critical time for crisis prevention [...] no common clear and therefore effective language in terms of preventive diplomacy was found [*emphasis in the original*].“³⁵

Regardless of this unfavourable example and the favourable cases cited, the question of the success or failure of the OSCE in handling ethnopolitical conflicts in Eastern Europe cannot be answered conclusively. “Today“, noted a leading German CSCE diplomat in 1993, “it can only be said that no new

1997, pp. 263-283.

³⁵ Kohlschütter, *Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Präventivdiplomatie*, p. 147 (as footnote 31).

conflicts have broken out in the regions where the CSCE has been active³⁶, and even five years on it is not possible to improve on this qualified statement. However, it can be said that the OSCE is expected to show some success in dealing with ethnopolitical conflicts where away from its rivalry with the United Nations, NATO or the European Union it can set its sights somewhat lower — Chechnya, Crimea, the Baltic states, South Ossetia, Transdniestria, Macedonia and Eastern Slavonia. The major conflicts such as Bosnia-Hercegovina or Nagorny-Karabakh are too unmanageable for its still embryonic structures with its insufficient military know-how and low acceptance among major partners. It cannot be expected to accomplish more than to transform conflicts that have broken out and to prevent future conflict in the still strong force field unleashed by the epoch-making 1989. The tectonic changes in Eastern Europe's newly emerging landscape of states and nations have not yet come to a standstill in many regions.

³⁶ Ulrich Brandenburg, Frühwarnung und Konfliktverhütung durch die KSZE — Lehren aus dem Jugoslawien-Konflikt, in: Wolfgang Pühs, Thomas Weggel, Claus Richter (eds.), Sicherheitspolitisches Symposium Balkankonflikt — Instrumente des Internationalen Krisenmanagements“, 25-27 June 1993, at Bayreuth University. Baden-Baden 1994, pp. 73-77, here p. 76.

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