

# Building a modern security community in the area from Vancouver to Vladivostok

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After the end of the cold war, under the pressure of dynamic changes, the European security system came to be less and less adequate to the needs and expectations of the OSCE societies. This praiseworthy organization was getting into a rut, and it was particularly due to NATO's and the EU's expansion as well as the growing confrontation between the Euro-Atlantic community and Russia. The proposal made by Dmitry Medvedev concerning a "European security architecture", though declined by the West, indicated the real need to renew a dialogue in the "OSCE Europe" directed at building a "security community". The issue whether the coming years will overcome the inertia and become a breakthrough in that regard remains open.

## PERSPECTIVES ON THE CURRENT SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

The construction of a pan-European security framework was initiated by the *Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe*, adopted in Helsinki in 1975<sup>1</sup>. This document set the basic principles governing relations among the states in the area from Vancouver to Vladivostok. It also established a forum for political dialogue and a framework for transparency and confidence in the military field. Following the end of the Cold War this framework was substantially strengthened by the *Charter of Paris for a New Europe*, adopted in 1990. The Charter developed new commitments, introducing for the first time democracy as a common

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<sup>1</sup> The CSCE formally opened in Helsinki on 3 July 1973, but the OSCE Final Act, or Helsinki Accords, laying foundations for the work of the CSCE/OSCE and outlining a number of politically binding commitments relating to politico-military, environmental and economic, and human aspects of security, was signed on 1 August 1975 at the end of the summit of heads of state or government from all of Europe (except Albania), the USA and Canada. See further the website of the OSCE, <http://www.osce.org/mc/43197> (accessed: 5 October 2011).

denominator for governance in the region. At the same time, a number of states agreed upon the *Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe* (CFE), which initiated the process of a modern arms control regime in the region.

This security framework was further enhanced with the adoption of new commitments, including the *Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security* in 1994 and the *Charter for European Security* in 1999. It played an invaluable role in facilitating profound changes in Europe that started in 1989.

After the Cold War and the disappearance of the bi-polar world, the states in the region decided to start a construction of a new security system. A system that would ensure peaceful co-existence among all Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) 56 participating states in accordance with the principles of international law and in the spirit of the Helsinki process, and would be rooted in freely accepted commitments. As a result, large-scale military conflicts were eradicated, the arms race was stopped, armaments were substantially reduced, co-operation and interdependence among the states in the region was strengthened.

Furthermore, the paradigm of two hostile blocks was replaced with a conviction of a need for a dialogue on common security. The states participating in this system agreed to allow each other capacity to monitor internal developments and verify compliance with their respective commitments. All this is an indication of how willing they have been to achieve and advance their shared goal: the creation of a common security space, without divisions, based on shared values and the observance of jointly agreed standards.

A very important part of this process was the evolution of other international organizations and institutions in the region, particularly the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) and the EU (European Union), which included their enlargement and the creation of frameworks promoting their close interaction on security-related issues with non-member states.

However, over the last few years, the European security system has proved to be less adequate to the current security environment. Divisions still exist among the states in the region. The arms control regime has weakened. The use of force in inter-state relations has ceased to be a taboo. And the spectre of provincialism, populism and nationalism are again on the rise. This has led to a decrease of confidence and trust among the states in the region. New challenges have arisen as well, including the need for the governments to ensure a relatively prosperous future for their highly expectant populations

in the context of an increasingly competitive environment with shrinking energy resources.

The most painful reminders of how far Europe is from realising the vision of a united, prosperous and peaceful common space are: continued instability in Georgia and the Western Balkans; the protracted Transnistrian and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts; the fundamental deterioration of arms-control and confidence- and security- building measures regimes; the use of energy resources for political gains and finally the erosion of the system safeguarding the implementation of democratic values and human rights across the entire continent.

As many institutional actors are intimately involved in the promotion of security in Europe, it is also regrettable that over the last two decades it has not been possible to break through all the institutional barriers and ensure their pragmatic, non-hierarchical and seamless interaction on issues of common interest. Various attempts were made to address the latter problem, including the adoption of the Platform for Co-operative Security by the 1999 OSCE Summit in Istanbul. Its main purpose was to strengthen the mutually reinforcing nature of the relationship between those organizations and institutions concerned with the promotion of comprehensive security, thereby making better use of the international community's resources.

Nevertheless, it proved very difficult to identify practical arrangements for ensuring synergy among the major institutional players. In the case of the international community's activities in response to the Albanian crisis in late 1990s, a very good and pragmatic interaction among all the organizations and institutions involved was established. At the same time, there are numerous examples of unnecessary competition among international actors involved in a specific geographic area or working on a specific cross-regional issue.

Another problem that came to the fore in the last few years is that the security arrangements adopted at the beginning of the 1990s did not foresee better mechanisms for integrating the Russian perspective into a pan-European security system. The Western powers, reassured by their victory in the Cold War, decided to base their activities on the belief in supremacy of the liberal democracy model. They assumed that all the others should adjust their perspectives and action to be in line with a Western vision of European security. This contributed to a lack of trust and a considerable disconnect between the West and Russia. The latter would have mostly preferred to sit out certain processes and separate the realization of its own interests from the issue of solving various difficult regional problems, which remain the priority of the West.

## MOST RECENT DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO THE EUROPEAN SECURITY DIALOGUE

Although the signs of serious problems have accumulated in the preceding period, including in relation to the way the Kosovo issue has been handled, it was not until August 2008 that the European security system crisis could not be ignored any longer. The fact that two of the European states – Russia and Georgia – entered into an open armed conflict was a real test for the entire European security system. And the results of this test were far from encouraging. The existing arrangements, particularly those created in the framework of the European institutions, proved insufficient to adequately react to the signs of the upcoming crisis, and when the conflict broke out the response was weak at best.

This gave the European leaders a strong impulse to look for new solutions. Realising multiple challenges to security, 56 participating states of the region decided to improve the framework of their common security by transforming it into a “security community” that should ensure:

- the unity between the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian regions;
- the link between “hard” and “soft” security;
- compatibility between the indivisibility of security and the existence of security alliances.

An important element in this process was the proposal by the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to adopt a legally-binding *European Security Treaty*<sup>2</sup>. Although originally presented in June 2008 in Berlin, this proposal was re-launched by President Medvedev in the presence of the French President Nicolas Sarkozy already after the war in Georgia at the Evian conference in October the same year<sup>3</sup>.

The Medvedev’s proposal was an expression of Russia’s dissatisfaction with the shape of the European security system which evolved in the last two decades when Russia’s influence was far smaller than during the Soviet period. From the substantive perspective, it was an attempt to draw the line under the volatile period following the collapse of the Soviet Union and to

<sup>2</sup> *Выступление на встрече с представителями политических, парламентских и общественных кругов Германии*, <http://kremlin.ru/transcripts/320> (accessed: 5 October 2011).

<sup>3</sup> The final text of the proposal was posted on the Kremlin’s website (<http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/275> – accessed: 5 October 2011) on 29 November 2009. Since the presentation of the initial idea in 2008, its major elements were introduced for discussion by the Russian representatives in various international contexts, including the OSCE. Prior to its publication President Medvedev sent the draft to a number of heads of state, as well as to NATO, the EU, the CSTO, the CIS and the OSCE, with a request for comments.

establish new formats, allowing Russia to exercise a stronger influence on the most topical security issues, including arms control and missile defence, enlargement of military alliances, and conflict management activities.

An interesting interpretation of reasons for developing this proposal was offered by Dmitry Suslov of the Moscow's Council on Foreign Relations at the expert meeting on European Security Dialogue that took place on 8 May 2009 in Vienna<sup>4</sup>. He said that one of Russia's principal sources of grievance and one of the main factors of instability in the current security structure was the fact that Moscow was left out of matters regarding the new pan-European security order. This was not a problem as long as Russia was weak and the West thought that Moscow had to accept the circumstances as they were. But now, Russia has become stronger and is not willing to accept this situation any longer. D. Suslov also stressed that institutions dealing with the European security became inefficient, in particular in the wake of several events, out of which the most evident example is the war in Georgia in 2008.

In response to President Medvedev's initiative, the channel for dialogue on this subject opened within the OSCE. These discussions came to be known as the "Corfu Process" (and in 2011 continue as "V to V dialogue"). A similar channel for interaction was also created within NATO. In the light of the initiative taken by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, it seems to be a question of time for the EU to initiate a platform of its own for similar discussions on security issues with Russia.

Efforts occurring within international organizations and institutions have been complemented by initiatives taken by specific states. Suffice it to mention in this context the "reset" policy of the United States or various bilateral and trilateral projects developed by France, Germany and Poland.

As to the dialogue within the "Corfu Process", the Kazakh chairmanship of the OSCE stated in the 2010 Interim Report, summarizing proposals put forward by OSCE participating states, that this "*has been grounded in the principles of equality, partnership, co-operation, inclusiveness and transparency. It has sought to address disagreements openly, honestly and in an unbiased manner, acknowledging diversities and concerns, in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding*".

<sup>4</sup> The meeting was organized by the Austrian Foreign Ministry. Its goal was to give the dialogue on European security a targeted impulse. It brought together officials and academics from the OSCE participating states. Discussions focused on the principle of indivisibility of security, current security challenges in the OSCE area and ways to strengthen existing instruments and institutions. See also *Expert meeting focuses on OSCE role in advancing European security dialogue*, <http://www.osce.org/cio/50900>, Press Release of the OSCE of 8 May 2009.

This dialogue focused on the following ten main issues:

- Implementation of all OSCE norms, principles and commitments;
- Role of the OSCE in early warning, conflict prevention and resolution, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation;
- Role of the arms control and confidence- and security-building regimes in building trust in the evolving security environment;
- Transnational and multidimensional threats and challenges;
- Economic and environmental challenges;
- Human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as democracy and the rule of law;
- Enhancing the OSCE's effectiveness;
- Interaction with other organizations and institutions on the basis of the 1999 Platform for Co-operative Security;
- Cross-dimensional approach to security;
- General questions of Euro-Atlantic security.

The level of engagement of the participating states in discussions on each of the above-mentioned topics was very high. Numerous proposals and food-for-thought papers were developed. The importance of this process should not be underestimated. Even though it did not produce many tangible results, it marked a real change in the way the participating states interact on issues related to the European security. For the first time in many years, the OSCE states began to analyse in a constructive way the most topical issues of their common security. They talked openly about their grievances and expectations and started working together to generate new ideas. As a result, the general perception was that the level of mutual confidence started to grow and thus the stage was set for a more constructive phase in the dialogue on European security.

This new positive climate started bearing fruit already in 2010. In particular, it was possible to agree on holding the OSCE summit in Astana (1–2 December 2010), the first meeting of the OSCE heads of state or government in more than a decade. Of course, concerns were expressed both in the course of preparations for and at the Summit that a meeting at this level was premature and a more significant progress within the European security debate ought to be made first. Still, although the results of the Summit fell short of expectations expressed by many states, without this meeting it would have been even more difficult to overcome the deadlock and initiate the process of restructuring the security system in the area from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

The other two high-level meetings that took place shortly before the Astana summit – that of the leaders of France, Germany and Russia in Deauville

(18–19 October 2010)<sup>5</sup> and the NATO Summit in Lisbon (19–20 November 2010) – also benefited from the improved climate which led to very promising results as far as the future of European security is concerned. There are various common features characterizing the outcomes of all three summits. Firstly, they formulated an ambitious vision of the future, based on the idea of a common security space. Secondly, they identified concrete priorities for action, among which the prevention and settlement of conflicts, restoration of a viable arms control regime and the fight against transnational threats to security feature prominently. Lastly, they reconfirmed the basic principles and commitments in which the European security is grounded.

Moreover, the Astana Declaration<sup>6</sup> defines the major threats to the security of the OSCE states. In this context it refers in particular to a need to achieve greater unity of purpose and action in facing transnational threats. It also points to the inextricable link between the participating states' security and that of adjacent areas by, *inter alia*, calling for effective international efforts to promote stable, independent, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan. Finally, the Astana Declaration defines the major elements of the vision of a future security community in the area from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

## VISION OF EURO-ATLANTIC AND EURASIAN SECURITY COMMUNITY

The idea of a “security community” was launched in the 1950s by Karl W. Deutsch and a group of other scholars. According to the definition they offered, a “*security community is one in which there is real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way*”<sup>7</sup>. “Security community” was also referred to by them as “*a group of people which has become ‘integrated’*”, i.e. they attained “*within a territory, a sense of community and of institutions and practices*

<sup>5</sup> See further the “*Statement for the France-Germany-Russia summit in Deauville*” at the website of the German Federal Government, [http://www.bundesregierung.de/nsc\\_true/Content/DE/\\_\\_\\_Anlagen/2010/2010-10-19-erklaerung-gipfeltreffen-deauville-eng,property=publicationFile.pdf/2010-10-19-erklaerung-gipfeltreffen-deauville-eng](http://www.bundesregierung.de/nsc_true/Content/DE/___Anlagen/2010/2010-10-19-erklaerung-gipfeltreffen-deauville-eng,property=publicationFile.pdf/2010-10-19-erklaerung-gipfeltreffen-deauville-eng) (accessed: 12 October 2011).

<sup>6</sup> See further the OSCE website (<http://summit2010.osce.org/sites/default/files/documents/444.pdf>)

<sup>7</sup> K.W. Deutsch, S.A. Burrell, R.A. Kann, M. Lee, Jr., M. Lichterman, R.E. Lindgren, F.L. Loewenheim, R.W. Van Wagenen, *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area*, Princeton, 1957, p. 5.

*strong enough and widespread enough to assure, for a 'long' time, dependable expectations of 'peaceful change' among its population*"<sup>8</sup>.

Building on these ideas a group of ambassadors within the OSCE, particularly those representing the EU member states, began to develop a vision of a possible common space involving all the states between Vancouver and Vladivostok, where the use of force would be unthinkable and common interest would prevail. Very quickly this vision gained ground and became a linchpin of the entire "*Corfu Process*". This is not to say that it was generally accepted by each and every State, as some, particularly those affected by regional conflicts, were rather sceptical, to say the least. But all were ready to engage in a constructive work on the basis of this vision.

As a result, the idea of moving towards a "security community" received overwhelming support from ministers of foreign affairs of the OSCE participating states during their informal meeting in July 2010 in Almaty, and later became the central element of the *Astana Summit Declaration*. The Declaration stresses that "*a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community should be rooted in agreed principles, shared commitments and common goals and should be aimed at meeting the challenges of the 21st century*". It also stipulates that the security community should be based "*on full adherence to common OSCE norms, principles and commitments across all three dimensions*". Furthermore, it "*should unite all OSCE participating states across the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region, free of dividing lines, conflicts, spheres of influence and zones with different levels of security*".

2011 should be the time to flesh out these ideas and proceed with concretising their meaning and finally to start designing the system that would correspond to the ambitious goals set in Astana. There is certainly no need to copy the existing security arrangements, particularly those developed by other institutional actors operating in the same geographic area. The strategic goal should be the construction of a more secure region in which the use of force and a hard-headed approach to international affairs decline while the *modus operandi* predominant in the North Atlantic region spreads throughout the entire area from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

The security community does not need to be institutionalised and certainly should not be a new organization or a permanent conference. Instead, it should be a platform for incremental regional integration, strengthening the trend towards co-operative security between nation states. Finally, it

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 5.



should be grounded in a very clear framework for co-operation among various state and institutional actors.

The future security community should be of a cross-dimensional character and build on the comprehensive and co-operative concept of security developed in the framework of the OSCE. Its main constituent elements could be: a code of general principles; a robust treaty regulating conventional arms in Europe; updated measures to promote confidence and security in the military sphere; reinforced conflict management provisions; specific measures on co-operation in the field of environment and energy security; and the updated human-security element.

## IMPLEMENTING THE VISION

The *Astana Declaration* tasks the chairmanship with organizing a follow-up process taking into consideration ideas and proposals put forward by the participating states. It also formulates an expectation that a concrete action plan in this regard will be developed. Finally, it stipulates that the progress achieved will be reviewed at the next Ministerial meeting in December 2011.

There should be no doubts that building a security community in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region is a multi-year project. Rapid progress on this issue can hardly be expected. The task to fulfil this very ambitious goal was formulated at the highest political level, but the recent events in the OSCE area, including continued infringements on human rights, serious violations of the rule of law and judicial independence as well as lack of progress on the settlement of regional conflicts, show how difficult and long this journey will be.

The momentum cannot be lost. Utmost caution will need to be exercised in planning further moves regarding the implementation of the security community vision. There is a need to focus on concrete objectives and proceed step-by-step. The first focus area could be the promotion of a closer interaction between Russia and the West on European security issues or, in other words, a framework for a full integration of Russia into the regional security system. If this does not occur, progress on the resolution of various regional crises and conflicts will hardly be possible and it will easily weaken Europe's attractiveness and effectiveness on the global stage.

The process can be enhanced by the application of a combination of measures of formal and informal character. At official level, the Lithuanian and

the subsequent OSCE chairmanships will have a great role to play. They will have to organize a structured follow-up taking into consideration the wealth of proposals that were tabled in the course of the last year. The chairmanships will also have to develop a concrete action plan based on the document that was originally meant to be a part of the Astana Declaration, but it proved impossible to get it finalised before the Summit. The involvement of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC), which alongside with the Permanent Council (PC) is a decision-making body of the OSCE, will also be of crucial importance.

Other participating states can and indeed should support efforts of the OSCE and FSC chairmanships by ensuring constant impetus for focused discussions, providing intellectual inputs to the debate, and ensuring that channels for influx of new ideas from outside the OSCE community remain open.

Close interaction between the OSCE and the other main institutional actors dealing with issues of European security will be indispensable for the implementation of the vision contained in the Astana Declaration. Future meetings to review the implementation of commitments in all three dimensions of security, particularly in the Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC) framework could, among other things, focus on institutional and practical arrangements ensuring a non-hierarchical, pragmatic and goal-oriented co-operation among the relevant actors during the work on fleshing out and implementing the concept of security community. To ensure success, a framework to facilitate a very active involvement of the relevant organizations and institutions should be identified.

A stronger involvement of the scientific community should be sought, particularly in specialized fields, such as arms control, confidence- and security-building measures and crisis management. Academics and experts could work on specific issues and feed the results of their activities into the security dialogue at the state level. This would, of course, require re-thinking of the ways states interact with academia and think-tanks and consequently creating an inter-linked framework for effective use of their know-how.

In particular, close co-operation links could be established with the Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative (EASI), which in its statement of 9 November 2010, collectively prepared by Sam Nunn, Wolfgang Ischinger, Igor Ivanov and Robert Legvold<sup>9</sup>, calls for the transformation of “*the great swath of states*

<sup>9</sup> S. Nunn, *Why Euro-Atlantic unity matters to world order*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2010/11/09/why-euro-atlantic-unity-matters-to-world-order/5gn> (accessed: 25 September 2011 r.).

*stretching from North America across Europe through Russia*” into “*a genuinely inclusive and vibrant security community*” and offers to provide specific suggestions on how to move this process forward.

Finally, linking debates on the implementation of the *Astana Summit Declaration* with the discussions within the framework of the Munich Conference on Security Policy could also be considered.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

As stated by the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, in his address to the Astana Summit, “*the OSCE is a symbol of both continuity and change*”. Over more than three decades the OSCE has been able to develop the body of commitments shaping the security landscape in the area from Vancouver to Vladivostok. In all likelihood these commitments will remain equally important and relevant in the foreseeable future. At the same time, the Organization has a proven record of being able to reinvent itself or, in other words, to adapt its *modus operandi* to the constantly changing security requirements.

The biggest change in this respect occurred at the end of the Cold War, when the then CSCE transformed itself from a forum for political dialogue into a multi-functional structure with very strong operational capacities. A very good illustration of this profound change is the fact that today the lion’s share of the Organization’s activities takes place in the field. Furthermore, the OSCE has a truly inclusive character and has the status of a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter.

These qualities are decisive in making the OSCE a proper framework for the continuation of the mainstream pan-European dialogue, with the aim of finding a response to the qualitatively changed security environment. At the same time, this dialogue can be successful only if all the other relevant institutional actors are actively engaged as equal partners.

Karl W. Deutsch wrote that “*the search for integrated political communities that command both peace and power, and that entail a good deal of amalgamation, is likely to continue until it succeeds*”.<sup>10</sup> He believed that his idea would be realised by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The reality proved to be more complicated. As was stated before, building a security community will not be a rapid, trouble-free process. But there is hardly any alternative.

<sup>10</sup> K.W. Deutsch, *The Analysis of International Relations*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1968, p. 47.

Given the contemporary threats and challenges occurring across the three dimensions of security and the shifting balance of power at the global level, all the states in the OSCE area are bound to gradually restructure their security relations. The era when security could be ensured without co-operation with others is long over. The creation of a true partnership for modernisation is the most convincing formula to ensure stability and prosperity in the OSCE area. Thus, there are reasons for optimism that the ambitious vision of a security community launched over 50 years ago and reflected recently in the Astana Declaration will one day become a reality.