Book Review

Alexey Lyzhenkov, *osce vs. Transnational Threats: Past, Present, Future* (LAP Lambert Academic Publishing 2018), 139 pp.

With this publication the author aims at facilitating “a consolidated and streamlined access to the decisions, declarations and statements, charters and strategies that might help to shape the OSCE way forward to address transnational threats”. This is exactly what this book does: it provides an excellent overview of all steps taken by the OSCE so far in the important security area of transnational threats (TNTs) both in terms of official statements and in terms of conferences and workshops.

The author’s work is informed by his considerable expertise in this area: as the first Director of the Transnational Threats Department (TNTD) of the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna, and at the same time holding the position of Coordinator on Transnational Threats, he has been in a unique position to not only follow all developments in this area, but also to be deeply involved with the practical challenges that they raise. With his 29 years of previous experience as a Russian diplomat, he brought considerable and relevant experience to this new post in the OSCE.

It has to be welcomed that he took the trouble to make a complete inventory of all formal steps taken by the OSCE community in the TNT area over the years of its existence. This results in a comprehensive introduction to all relevant decisions by all OSCE bodies, which is a useful introduction for everybody interested by the question of how the organization is dealing with TNT. Such an overview is also useful because finding all this information on the OSCE website is far from easy.

The first chapter deals with the adoption of all relevant OSCE commitments in a strictly chronological order by summarizing the main decisions of the subsequent CSCE Follow-up Meetings, Summits and Ministerials. In the second chapter, the author focuses more specifically on the main areas of TNT. When dealing with the fight against terrorism, for instance, the author deals

extensively with the outcomes of the annual counter-terrorism conferences. This whole chapter clearly reflects that a major part of the OSCE's work on anti-terrorism, border management, cyber crime, combating drugs and transnational organized crime seems to consist of a range of annual conferences and workshops. Such expert meetings have provided a large number of practical recommendations and guidelines for use by individual participating States in countering TNTs. The impact of such documents, however, will require further research and another book.

The third chapter deals mainly with the relations between the TNTD and the various OSCE institutions and Parliamentary Assembly (PA), again reflected in jointly organized conferences. In this context the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) is conspicuously missing, as the author only reports about events with the Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the PA. Why the HCNM is not (yet) involved in the transnational threats dimension, at least as far as the work of TNTD is concerned, remains unclear.

The fourth chapter gives an overview of the relations with other international organizations, such as United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), INTERPOL, Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), Shanghai Cooperation Council, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), International Air Transport Association (IATA), Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe and European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL). It indicates that the OSCE is well-connected in performing its tasks with other key players in the TNT area.

A last chapter discusses the 'way forward'. The author correctly recommends the development of an easily accessible database of all documents discussed in his book, as right now it's an almost impossible and time-consuming task to find all of them at the OSCE website. Other recommendations concern, for instance, the reconvening of regular meetings of Chiefs of Police (as only one such meeting took place so far, in 2006) and the further exploration of public-private partnerships in fighting crime.

It may be concluded that this new publication definitely fills a gap, as so far it is not easy to get an oversight of all OSCE activities related to TNTs. This book represents such a collection. It is only regrettable that the author did not include trafficking in human beings and weapons as well as anti-corruption in his study. These topics are important TNTs, but for some obscure reasons they happen to be dealt with in other departments of the OSCE Secretariat instead of the TNTD and this was the reason for the author to leave these topics out. A brief introduction about the OSCE and its main decision-making bodies would also have been helpful, as the information is somewhat hidden in a number

of footnotes. The book focuses almost exclusively on activities at the level of the TNTD which implies that TNT-related activities by the various OSCE Field Operations are not discussed.

The rather unknown 'academic publisher' does not deserve much credit: the layout is not very professional and the book would have benefitted a lot from some linguistic editing. A brief index would have allowed easier use of the book and should be considered a minimum condition for academic publications in general. It can't be denied that the author deserved a more professional service than what has been provided to him by "LAP".

However, in spite of these small shortcomings, the book offers a wealth of descriptive information about what the OSCE has done in the topical area of TNTs. As a matter of fact it demonstrates how much has been done, even though most of this is more or less hidden from the public view since most of OSCE's activities in general are hardly on the front pages of the world press. That's the fate of an organization which has been created to prevent conflicts instead of fighting wars. The fact that in particular conferences and workshops are discussed in the book may give the impression of OSCE as a 'debating club', but one has to keep in mind that these regular gatherings of top-level experts, discussing issues of great concern, can and do have an impact upon practice. That could be an interesting topic for a second volume of this book.

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