Valery Perry1

Introduction
The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (MBIH, or the Mission) marks its tenth anniversary in 2005, just as the Dayton Peace Agreement2 that ended the war commemorates the same milestone. As one of the largest and most established of the OSCE field missions, this experience has been important for the leadership of the Mission in terms of its continuing work in BIH, as well as for the broader leadership of the Organization, as it has provided an extended opportunity to learn about what does and does not work in such sensitive post-conflict and transition field-based initiatives. What are some of the highlights of this ten-year intervention effort that followed a three and a half year war that displaced half of the population and resulted in approximately 150,000 dead?

And, more importantly for policy-makers and scholars that follow the OSCE, what has the Organization — both as a political body and through its field mission — contributed to this complex peace-building, state-building and post-war reconstruction process, and how might it move forward in the continuing implementation of post-Dayton peace? This is a broad and sweeping question that will ultimately be addressed in the years to come, when the benefit of time has allowed for a clearer picture of this unique and still-unfinished historical experience. This essay will sketch out some of the highlights of the OSCE’s experience in BIH with an emphasis on lessons learned from its ten-year old Mission, and raise some of the broader policy and programmatic challenges facing not just the Mission to BIH, but the OSCE’s field work in general.

Background
The war in BIH, and the ultimate signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP, commonly known as the Dayton Agreement) on 14 December 1995 occurred during a time of profound change in the OSCE as a regional security organization. After serving as a forum for Cold War debate, discussion and negotiation for over two decades, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in

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1 Valery Perry is a doctoral candidate at the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University. She has lived and worked in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1999, for organizations including the OSCE, NATO Stabilization Force and the European Centre for Minority Issues. All views expressed are her own.

2 The agreement is generally referred to as the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA), though its formal title is the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP).
Europe (CSCE) significantly repositioned itself as the more institutionalized and structured OSCE in 1994, reflecting the changing nature of security in the post-Cold War world. A conference which served as a relatively loose forum for high diplomacy and sensitive discussion began to institutionalize itself as an operational organization, with a Secretariat based in Vienna and a host of associated institutions (including the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the High Commissioner for National Minorities (HCNM)). Perhaps most significantly in terms of its scope and direct involvement on the ground, the OSCE expanded its work directly into the field through the establishment of a number of field offices aimed at ensuring early warning, conflict prevention and crisis management. Comprehensive security as typified through the 1975 Helsinki Act’s three ‘baskets’ or dimensions (politico-military, economic and environmental and humanitarian and human rights) gradually took on a much more active (and some might say activist) dimension.

As one of the largest and longest-standing field missions, the Mission to BiH has both been shaped by and has influenced this evolving Organization. It was established in December 1995, building from a small Mission in Sarajevo set up in 1994 to support the establishment of the Federation Ombudsman³, and driven by the general terms and mandates of the Dayton Agreement. However, while the military mandate assigned to NATO in Dayton was spelled out in significant detail in Annex IA of the Agreement, the civilian mandates — including that of the OSCE — were very broad. The OSCE was to support Regional Stabilization (Annex 1B, Articles II and IV), Elections (Annex 3), and Human Rights (Annex 6, Article XIII). Of these, elections provided the Mission with the highest profile in the first years after the war.

While the drafters and signers of the Dayton Agreement may have envisaged a short and sweet one-year period of intense international involvement, from the beginning it became clear to people on the ground that the timeframes to achieve Dayton’s objectives and an international community exit strategy were unrealistic; something most notably marked by the replacement of the notion of an ‘end-date’ with that of an ‘end-state’.⁴ The evolution of the Mission’s approach to fulfilling its Dayton mandate over the past decade has been in many ways reflective of the evolution of post-conflict peace-building and democratization activities more generally. In the initial ‘heyday’ of post-Cold War democratization, elections were front and centre in the catalogue of democratization strategies. (Dayton mandated that elections be held between six and nine months after the signing of the

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³ The Mission was initially called the CSCE Mission in Sarajevo, and, until the signing of the Dayton Agreement, the Mission was supporting the establishment of an Ombudsman only in the territory of the Muslim-Croat Federation of BiH.

⁴ NATO’s Stabilization Force (SFOR) was initially planned to be a mission that would last 18 months — until June 1998. However, the North Atlantic Council decided against this, opting to continue the NATO presence in BiH through a follow-on force (named ‘Operation Joint Forge’) that would exist not until a specified date, but until the desired end state was reached. See A Decade with Dayton, James Orzech and Beth Kampschror, August 2004.