The Role of the CSCE in the New European Security Environment

Wilhelm Höynck

Introduction
Let me first of all thank you. I feel deeply honoured by the invitation of two such distinguished societies. The Netherlands plays an important role in the CSCE. Many of you have certainly clear and far-sighted ideas on the future of the CSCE. This is why I am particularly grateful for the discussion that will follow my presentation.

The Hague is the seat of the High Commissioner on National Minorities and thus has a prominent place on the map of CSCE activities. Mr. Max van der Stoel, the first High Commissioner on National Minorities, has made this new CSCE tool — as several delegates at the last meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials put it — 'a real success story'. This is to a large extent a personal success for the High Commissioner. I feel particularly honoured by his presence in this Auditorium.

Our discussion takes place at a time which is crucial for the future of the European security. The same is true for institutions and organisations involved in it, including the CSCE. Consideration of this topic raises the basic questions which today occupy the minds of politicians, diplomats, military strategists and security experts:

Is a lasting and peaceful order in Europe an attainable goal? Do the policies we are pursuing move us any closer to this goal? Are the existing institutions adequate instruments for establishing and maintaining such a new order?

These questions express the growing perplexity and the obvious lack of orientation vis-à-vis the security development in Europe. Scepticism in the ability of the Western institutions to project stability into the East; serious doubts as to the effectiveness of diplomacy and political solutions in coping with our new problems; helplessness in the face of continuing wars and conflicts; — these are characteristic perceptions of the situation as seen and expressed by public opinion. The gap between vision and reality is growing. But, as President Clinton said in his speech to the UN General Assembly, 'we must inspire our people to look beyond their immediate fears toward a broader horizon'.

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1. This article is an adapted version of a speech by the Secretary General of the CSCE, Dr. Wilhelm Höynck, to the Royal Association for Military Science and the Netherlands Society for International Affairs (The Hague, 4 October 1993).
The CSCE Agenda in the Past

In the past the CSCE agenda was clear: to ease block to block confrontation, to limit the Soviet threat, to build bridges between West and East and foster the freedom of captive nations. But let us not forget that at the time many were more than critical vis-à-vis the CSCE. Not very different from today they asked, what can a lofty structure like the CSCE do other than to weaken NATO and strengthen the Soviet grip on its empire? However, the task as seen by Western and non-aligned countries, and by the less and less silent majority in Central and Eastern Europe, has been successfully achieved: even far beyond what we could realistically expect. The CSCE was instrumental in bringing about revolutionary change by peaceful means and without bloodshed. Certainly not the CSCE alone, but as a framework attracting and reinforcing decisive political inputs. Concentrating for once on the military aspects of security, it is worthwhile to ask why the old CSCE was successful.

First of all, the CSCE concentrated on elaborating concrete measures. To build confidence and reduce confrontation, the concept of confidence- and security-building measures was successfully put into practice. The CSCE developed the notions of transparency and predictability in the field of arms control. It was the CSCE Stockholm Document of 1986 which for the first time introduced obligations for on-site inspections without the right of refusal on the European continent. The elaborated measures, although often described as soft arms control, contributed significantly to eliminating suspicion and mistrust.

Second, the CSCE provided continuity. It helped to maintain dialogue between the blocs even in the most tense periods. At times the CSCE was the only platform of arms control and security negotiations between East and West. After the start of the deployment of the INF missiles, the Soviets pulled out of all negotiations, except the Stockholm Conference. Sometimes the mere possibility of preserving dialogue was equal in importance to new arms control measures.

Third, through its comprehensive approach towards security the CSCE helped to put arms control into an overall political framework. It consolidated the Western position that human rights and fundamental freedoms are as important for peace as control and reduction of military potentials. This was a glorious transformation of a firm belief in the fundamental importance of human rights into a strategic goal. It started modestly with the introduction of ‘freer movement of people, ideas and information’ into the East-West agenda, making the CSCE not a tool for consolidating the then geo-strategic status quo, but a vehicle for change.

The crowning of the arms control efforts pursued in the framework of the CSCE process was and is the CFE Treaty. It is also a good example of the possibility to develop specific solutions for specific problems within a CSCE framework. Together with the Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-building Measures and the Treaty on Open Skies, the CFE Treaty constitutes the solid foundation for security cooperation. The essentials are the absence of