Peter Kooijmans gave his introduction the title: 'The OSCE: A problem child with growth disorders'. This raises the question of what a mature OSCE will look like. Mr Kooijmans believes that ideally the OSCE will develop into a full-fledged regional security organization along the lines of those described in Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. However, such a security organization can only be effective if three conditions are met. Firstly, the participating states of the organization must sign a treaty wherein they promise to assist a fellow member state should it come under attack. Secondly, in order to ensure political decisiveness its members must not be allowed the right to veto decisions. Thirdly, the organization must become a decisive military entity.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, there have been some indications that the OSCE might indeed develop in this direction. In practical terms, the best way of accomplishing this would have been to amalgamate the OSCE and NATO. A step-by-step expansion of NATO could provide the OSCE with a treaty-based means for cooperation. That being the case, it would then be logical that this regional organisation propose to the United Nations (UN) that it be responsible, in the first instance, for dealing with problems occurring in the OSCE region. In certain circumstances it would even be feasible that the OSCE would have the authority to use economic and military sanctions according to Article 53 of the UN Charter.

Further suggestions have maintained that, in order to enhance the political decisiveness of the OSCE, a European Security Council should be established. This Council would include four (United States, United Kingdom, France and Russia) of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. The only difference with the Security Council in New York would be that Germany should also be given veto power in this new council. However, such a European Security Council would easily fall prey to disagreement between the 'Big Five', as is the case in the UN Security Council. Therefore, it would be a far more effective step to introduce provisions for majority decision-making. It is worth noting in comparison that NATO functions on the principle of unanimous decision-making. However, this is because the alliance has been able to rely on the leadership of the United States at crucial moments to overcome any political indecision arising from this arrangement. In the past

---

1. This article is based on a presentation that Professor Jan-Geert Siccama gave at the symposium entitled 'OSCE: Talking shop or security organization?' on 5 September 1995 in The Hague, the Netherlands. The symposium was held on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and organized by the Netherlands Helsinki Committee, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Atlantic Commission, the Netherlands Institute for International Relations 'Clingendael', the Foundation on Inter-Ethnic Relations and the office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities.
military alliances have not always been effective at military decision-making. However, NATO has been able to avoid this pitfall because it has an integrated military organization and the North Atlantic Treaty at its disposal.

Thus with the presence of American leadership, an expanded military structure including NATO, Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), could conceivably lead to the complete pacification of an area stretching from Vladivostok to Vancouver. In such a scenario the collective defensive capabilities of the participating states would form the basis for a collective security arrangement within this area. This would seem to be the only feasible way of finally disposing of the stigma arising from failed attempts at collective security in the past.

In the day to day developments since this ambitious scenario was first launched it has made no progress. How can this be explained?

In the first place, NATO and the OSCE have been seen as competing organizations. One was either in favour of the OSCE (and did not trust the Western NATO) or one was in favour of the NATO (and did not trust the pan-European OSCE). As a result the opportunity for the synergetic fusion of a legitimating institution (OSCE) and an effective military organization (NATO) was lost. Recently Russian policy has returned to its attempts to expand its sphere of influence via the OSCE, while at the same time NATO’s role in the organization has again been marginalized. When this is taken in conjunction with NATO’s refusal to expand and admit new members it becomes apparent that a dividing line between East and West still exists and that in that sense the Cold War has not ended yet.

Secondly, the existing structures could not cope with recent outbreaks of violence, especially in the Balkans and Caucasus. To be sure, the OSCE had established conflict resolution and human dimension mechanisms designed to deal with intra-state conflicts in the former Soviet bloc. However, these various negotiating methods, missions, and new institutions proved effective only in mitigating limited conflicts in which the parties involved remained reasonable and where the situation did not escalate into one of protracted and bloody warfare. Together with the European Union’s Common Foreign and Security Policy, the OSCE became one of the first victims of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. All the OSCE proved capable of doing was sending observer missions to monitor the escalation of the conflict.

Finally, the renationalization of foreign policy by the OSCE member states undermined the organization. Indeed all the multi-national organizations involved in the Yugoslav crisis were to varying extents disabled by the conflicting interests of their respective member states. Attempts by Western countries to deny Russia a monopoly on peace-keeping activities (read:

---


Helsinki Monitor 1995 no. 4