

Preface

In many ways, the post-bipolar period is radically different from the preceding eras. Just consider the changed nature and ever-widening range of challenges, risks and threats, or the world order that, after a brief unipolar period, has taken on a multipolar character, with power centres in all parts of the world. An equally important change in the post-Cold War era is the widening circle of actors shaping security, which strongly underpins the need for this volume. Nowadays, states, as the traditional actors in international relations, are far from being the only ones shaping world political events. The range of actors shaping security has been extended to include a number of sub-state and supranational actors, and international organisations are among the key players in the latter.

Today, there is hardly a researcher, security policy expert or politician who would question the role of international organisations in international politics, although the extent of their influence, their positive or negative impact, their independence and bias varies from organisation to organisation. The aim of this volume is to present and evaluate the structure, functioning and areas of activity of the most important organisations from a security policy perspective, namely the world organisation, and the organisations of the Euro-Atlantic area and the other continents. It does so in a coherent structure that first introduces the reader to the organisation itself and its operational characteristics, and then, in a chapter immediately following, to the crisis management activities of the organisation. The United Nations is the first of these organisations to be introduced as the only universal international organisation. The reader gets an insight into what the theoretical construct of collective security means and how it works in practice, both within the framework of the organisation and in the UN's peace operations. The authors then introduce four organisations that are key to the Euro-Atlantic area: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and then examine the mission activities of each organisation. The authors have devoted the three concluding chapters of the volume to an introduction to the security organisations of the three continents, Africa, Asia and the Americas.

The activities of international organisations are important not only for global policy-making, but also for the security of our country. Hungary is now a member of all the major international organisations in our region, which has brought about changes in our daily lives that would have been unimaginable before. This change has clearly improved the security situation of our country and has also positively shaped our bilateral and multilateral relations.

The world of international organisations is gradually taking shape, as are other forums for intergovernmental cooperation. The nearly 80 years, since the end of the Second World War have shown that, while organisations cannot always respond quickly and adequately to all challenges, they can contribute to maintaining or, where necessary,

restoring international peace and security by providing a forum for interstate interaction and by channelling disputes. In today's turbulent world, international security organisations are the safe haven to which we can turn in the most difficult times and which may be capable of solving the most serious problems.

Editors