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OSCE – Missions

Introduction

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is regarded as an international organisation which uses mainly tools of soft power. Indeed, it does not have military force for peacekeeping and it conducts mostly civilian missions centred on the three dimensions of crisis management: politico-military, economic and environmental, and human. Politico-military areas of co-operation in the OSCE comprise consultation and exchange of information on military equipment, arms control, the safe storage of small arms and ammunition, and defence sector reform, among other things. American political scientist Joseph Nye defines soft power as the ability to attract through cultural and political values rather than coercion (Nye 2008: 95). This may be true for the OSCE since its decisions are not legally but politically binding for its member states. It is also believed that deeds have a greater role in wielding soft power than publicity and promotion (Nye 2008: 104; Leonard et al. 2002: 53; Rada 2019: 1–10). So the commitment of the member states to co-operation in confidence building significantly enhances security and regionally supports the objectives of the UN to maintain international peace and security.

The OSCE is unique because it does not have a founding document which could clearly describe its institutions and regulate their operation and still has been working as the largest regional security organisation with its 57 participating states. Besides, it does not have a legal personality (see the previous chapter), which means it must rely on the ad hoc decisions of its participating states. These decisions must be made by consensus, which seems to be a challenge taking into consideration its extensive membership. Even more contradictory is the fact that these two features were allegedly demanded by the two opponent powers of the Cold War (Remler 2021: 1): the lack of legal personality was supported by the U.S., in order to prevent competition with the United Nations; and working on the principle of consensus was preferred by the Soviet Union in order to retain some of its influence.

Despite its shortcomings, the OSCE has remarkable achievements in peacekeeping in collaboration with other international organisations. Three aspects will be summarised in this section: 1. flexibility; 2. the inclusion of local people; 3. pooling equipment. 1. One reason for the success of OSCE participation in missions may be, in lack of full institutionalisation, its flexibility: it has a relatively small but very targeted budget, and its regulations allow fund raising from "extra-budgetary projects" (Dijkstra et al. 2019: 525). The low level of institutionalisation is not always a drawback: for instance, veto options are fewer in the decision-making process than in a more formalised system of decision-making. Thus, the deployment of a mission together with giving or extending

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its mandate is faster and less complicated than in other organisations. 2. Another positive feature of the OSCE is inclusion: the rate of local staff it employs is much higher than that of its own staff. The recruitment of staff for field operations is facilitated by a roster of experts who can be invited and selected well before a mission is given a mandate. 3. Last, but not least, participating states have created a virtual pool of equipment (Dijkstra et al. 2019: 533), which allows the organisation to pursue specific projects flexibly. The OSCE is definitely not a large and well-funded organisation, nevertheless, in 2022 it operated 14 peacekeeping missions, with only 267 personnel and 2,199 locally contracted staff. For comparison: the United Nations had 79,447, the EU had 4,453, and NATO had 4,270 employees in the same period of time (Sipri 2022).

This chapter provides an overview of the main institutional components that have a role in crisis management and peacekeeping, then refers to the major documents which create a theoretical basis for this activity. Field missions will be characterised shortly, then a case study of the OSCE participation in crisis management in Ukraine will be presented. The last section summarises the partnerships of the OSCE and the conclusions try to forecast future developments.

The institutional background to OSCE missions

The Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC)

The CPC of the OSCE is located in Vienna. It is involved in early warning, mediation and conflict resolution in all three dimensions of security and at each point of the conflict cycle (see the previous chapter on the OSCE). It monitors the developments in the regions which are of major concern to the organisation: Eastern Europe, Southeastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. It facilitates the implementation of confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) described in the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security of 1994 and the Vienna Document of 2011. Thus, it keeps track of military equipment, conventional weapons and military expenditure. The Centre operates various mechanisms developed for the peaceful settlement of disputes and for crisis response.

The priority of the CPC is field operations, which play a decisive role in crisis management taking into consideration that they employ 80% of the staff and consume 60% of the core budget of the whole organisation (OSCE 2020a: 2). The CPC plans and, if necessary, restructures or closes operations and, in addition, assesses their efficiency and puts in practice the lessons learnt from field experience. The operations tackle issues arising in all three dimensions of the activities of the OSCE: politico-military, economic and environmental as well as human. Some examples are: confidence building measures in military and non-military fields; mediation and dialogue facilitation; project management; non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, destruction of small arms, light weapons and conventional ammunition; gender mainstreaming of OSCE activities.

The CPC is constituted by:

1. The Policy Support Service, which involves four regional desks and the Regional Support Service, which consists of the Planning and Analysis Team and the Mediation Support team as well as the Situation/Communications Room.
2. The Programming and Evaluation Support Unit.
3. The Forum for Security Co-operation Support Section including the Communications Network Unit.

From the Policy Support Service, the role of the Situation/Communications Room should be highlighted as it establishes a link between the Secretariat and the field operations around the clock in crisis or in an emergency situation (OSCE 2020a: 2).

In summary, the Conflict Prevention Centre provides assistance to member states in complying with their commitments. In this respect its advisory support to the Forum for Security Co-operation should be emphasised, as the Forum is a decision-making body on politico-military issues.

The Forum for Security Co-operation

The Forum for Security Co-operation is a decision-making body below the level of the Summit and the Ministerial Council. It works alongside with the Permanent Council (see Figure 1 in the previous chapter). While at the Summit the Heads of State or Government of the 57 member states meet when required, the Foreign Ministers hold the Ministerial Council annually. The Permanent Council meets every week to offer opportunity for the permanent representatives for political dialogue. In parallel, the Forum for Security Co-operation allows the permanent representatives consultation on security and military issues (OSCE 2020b: 3). In addition to the negotiation of security and confidence building measures, the evaluation of the implementation of decisions takes place within the framework of the Forum.

The Forum has its own rotational system of chairing based on four-month cycles, independently of the OSCE chairmanship but collaborating closely with the incumbent Chairperson-in-Office. The Forum for Security Co-operation Support Section (FSC Support Section) is the hub for military information exchange, which means that it provides assistance to the field operations.

The theoretical background to OSCE missions reflected by major documents

The Charter of the United Nations (1945) is referred to in OSCE documents as the principal source of the guidelines for co-operation and efforts for the peaceful settlement of disputes. The functioning of the OSCE is in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter, which permits regional arrangements to participate in the maintenance of international peace and security and to take regional action for the pacific settlement of local disputes.

In the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe Final Act, in short, the Helsinki Final Act (1975), the participating states agreed that they remain committed to the Charter of the UN in the event of a conflict between it and any other international treaty or agreement (OSCE 1975: 8). This already foreshadowed that all the documents of the CSCE, later OSCE would harmonise with the UN Charter. Consequently, they express the member states' commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes and to making efforts for the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

The Charter of Paris for a New Europe (1990) welcomed the re-unification of Europe and forecast an era of democracy and co-operation. This was based on confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) mentioned formerly, and, more importantly, on the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (1990), which was expected to establish a balance at a lower level of military equipment as a result of arms reduction (OSCE 1990: 8). Although the Treaty was considered a success at the end of the bipolar world order, its gradual erosion started from the early 2000s, leading to Russia's suspension of its obligations in 2007, then Poland stopped the implementation of the treaty with reference to Belarus in 2023 because of the Russia–Ukraine war, and Russia formally withdrew from the treaty in the same year (Kimball–Hernández 2023). In addition, the Charter reaffirmed the significance of the Open Skies Initiative on mutual air surveillance. The Open Skies Treaty was opened for signature in 1992 but took effect only in 2002. A negative outcome of the current Russia–Ukraine war is the withdrawal of the USA from the treaty in 2020, and that of Russia in 2021 (see the previous chapter).

The Helsinki Document of 1992 contains specifications on the early warning and crisis management tools of the CSCE (Confidence and Security Co-operation in Europe until its change of name in 1994; see the previous chapter). The types of missions are enumerated (CSCE 1992: 15–23): early warning, fact-finding and rapporteur, then peacekeeping missions are mentioned. As for the regulations on peacekeeping missions, the document contains the following: the missions will involve military and civilian personnel; will range from small-scale to large-scale; and will be centred on classic peacekeeping tasks, for instance, monitoring ceasefires and troop withdrawals; besides, humanitarian and medical aid (CSCE 1992: 19). This section of the document on peacekeeping also refers to compliance with the provisions of the UN Charter: peacekeeping may take place under Chapter VIII of the Charter on the role of regional arrangements in the maintenance of international peace and security. The Chairperson-in-Office keeps the UN Security Council fully informed about the activities. The description of the chain of command and guidelines for financing are also included. Partnership with other organisations than the UN is also emphasised (see below). The document is evidence that, originally, the objective of the organisation was to develop independent peacekeeping capabilities; nevertheless, this idea was given up and now NATO fills this role (Remek 2020: 85).

The Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security (hereinafter: Code of Conduct) adopted in 1994 aimed at regulating the use and preventing the misuse of armed forces in OSCE member states in both external and internal matters. Its Preamble recognises the significance and values of the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris and the Helsinki Document of 1992 (OSCE

1994: 1). In the Code of Conduct, the participating states bind themselves to refraining from the violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of another state, at the same time, maintaining their right to individual and collective self-defence. Furthermore, they commit themselves to co-operation, the peaceful settlement of disputes and joint crisis management efforts (OSCE 1994: 4–5).

Field missions of the OSCE

The field missions and programmes of the OSCE reflect its comprehensive approach to security. They can be characterised based on the three dimensions of security also included in the Helsinki Final Act: politico-military, economic and environmental, and human. Historically, OSCE Missions were first launched right after the Cold War in response to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and to the wars in the former Yugoslavia. Actually, this type of OSCE activity was at its height at the end of the Yugoslav wars, in 1999, with a staff of 1,500. A recent surge in the size of missions occurred when the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine employed 850 international staff in 2018 (Dijkstra et al. 2019: 525). Since the Yugoslav wars, field operations have adapted to the changing political circumstances and have become more versatile.

OSCE Missions ongoing in 2023 are as follows (OSCE s. a.c):

- Presence in Albania
- Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Mission to Kosovo
- Mission to Montenegro
- Mission to Serbia
- Mission to Skopje
- Mission to Moldova
- Centre in Ashgabat
- Programme Office in Astana
- Programme Office in Bishkek
- Programme Office in Dushanbe
- Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan
- Personal representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference

The mandates of the missions are granted by the Permanent Council, by consensus of the OSCE participating states. The agreement of the host state is essential. In general, the Conflict Prevention Centre implements the decision by the Permanent Council to deploy, restructure or close a mission. It also liaises between the missions, the Secretariat and the Chairperson-in-Office.

The names of the missions vary according to their organisational structure. Some of them may have field offices or regional or training centres apart from their headquarters. A shared feature of their work is that they co-operate with the government and local

authorities as well as civil organisations and they employ only a small number of international staff. The proportion of local fixed-term staff is usually much larger. For instance, as stated in the Factsheet of the Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (OSCE 2022a), the mission had 34 international and 281 local employees in 2022 and its budget amounted to 11,682,000 EUR. Up-to-date information on the field operations is published annually in print by the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC), apart from the OSCE home page. Since the organisation aims at transparency, all types of field and field-related operations are described in detail, with special regard to the following: basic decisions; tasks; deployment; duration; composition; financial implications (OSCE 2021).

The comprehensive perspective on security of the OSCE field operations can be illustrated with the example of the Centre in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan (OSCE s. a.a). The range of activities comprises all the three areas of security:

Table 1: The work of an OSCE mission from comprehensive security perspective

	OSCE centre in Ashgabat	
Politico-military	**Economic, environmental**	**Human**
Arms control	Economic activities	Gender equality
Border management	Environmental activities	Human rights
Conflict prevention		Combating human trafficking
Countering terrorism		Good governance
Elections		Media freedom
Rule of law		

Source: Compiled by the author based on OSCE s. a.a

Table 1 shows the intricate nature of security operations: areas may overlap, some phenomena may prove cross-dimensional and require thorough preliminary planning; an example could be economic development and environment protection. The complexity of the operation, nevertheless, also raises the questions of efficiency and staffing.

The missions of the OSCE are generally considered efficient because of their flexible and quick response to crises, regional expertise and institutional inclusivity. Typically, the missions are planned to be long-range, which adds to their benefits, but also increases their budget, which poses a challenge financially. Another problem is that the structure and procedures of the organisation has to adapt to the changing climate of international relations.

As a result of lessons learnt, the OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions (2014) has made recommendations on the future of field operations. In their view, the OSCE should establish sub-regional offices in addition to field operations for more support. The parties to a field operation should continuously adjust the mandate to the changing circumstances and needs of the host country. The member states need to clarify under what conditions security sector assistance involving a police contingent should be provided. The staff must be offered improved and more customised training. The organisation needs to campaign for more extra-budgetary funds and needs to depoliticise

the budget planning procedure while making it more accurately defined. On the whole, the organisation must enhance its visibility in the media (OSCE Network 2014: 4–5). The document also includes suggestions about opening a liaison office in Brussels and establishing closer ties with other international organisations. (Co-operation between the OSCE and other organisations will be summarised later.) Despite the criticism worded in the mentioned study, the soft power of the OSCE is widely acknowledged. However, the impact of the deterioration of the security environment caused by the unfolding crisis in Ukraine and the paralysis of the OSCE mechanisms must be discussed.

The OSCE in Ukraine from 2014

The classic missions of the OSCE from the end of the Cold War seemed to revive in the Special Monitoring Mission launched in Ukraine in 2014. First, it employed 850 international staff, which was the greatest number since the war in Kosovo in 1999. Second, the activities also were similar with respect to patrolling, monitoring checkpoints and the observance of a ceasefire.

According to analysts, the current crisis in Ukraine was sparked by Russia's annexation of the Crimea and the territorial dispute over East Ukraine unfolded in three phases: 1. a "hybrid war" started by Russia; 2. "anti-terrorist operations" by Ukraine; 3. counter-offensive operations to the "anti-terrorist operations" by Russia (Remler 2021: 7–10). The Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) of the OSCE was authorised as early as 21 March 2014 via *Permanent Council Decision No. 1117* (OSCE 2014). From the Interpretative Statements attached, it becomes clear that Ukraine had requested the deployment of the SMM; that the USA and Canada expressed their commitment to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine; and the Russian Federation accepted the deployment of the SMM but insisted that its activities and area of deployment should be strictly limited, taking into consideration its view that "the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol have become an integral part of the Russian Federation". In the same Interpretative Statement, Russia, however, stated that it was willing to take part in the work of the SMM.

The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine was an unarmed civilian mission which informed the international community on the security situation in Ukraine and tried to facilitate dialogue (OSCE s. a.b). The SMM was actually working in close co-operation with the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) and the Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk (OM). The three components of the OSCE endeavouring to settle or at least bring under control the crisis in Ukraine involved 700 monitors from 44 OSCE participating states in 2021 (Remler 2021: 7–10). Despite the efforts, the mission increasingly faced a shift from a conflict to full-scale hostilities. The mounting tensions were reflected by the attitude of the Russian Federation to the role taken by the OSCE: initially, as it was said above, Russia had agreed to the mission, but, as its perception of Europe changed, it started to see Europe as a rival. This was in line with Russia's standpoint adopted earlier, which resented that European security

was more reliant on NATO than the OSCE, which was implied as early as 2009 (Dunay 2009: 30–38; Rada–Stepper 2019: 172–194).

From the perspective of the OSCE, Russia successfully blocked the work of the mission in two ways: on the one hand, by insisting that it was not a participant of the hostilities, only a mediator between the Ukrainian Government and the Russian separatists. On the other hand, by limiting the activities and movement of the mission, which resulted in its failure to prevent the transportation of heavy weapons across the border from Russia to East Ukraine. The mandate of the Special Monitoring Mission was last extended in March 2021 until March 2022 (OSCE 2021). At the Permanent Council Meeting on 31 March 2022, due to lack of consensus, a decision was made about the closure of the SMM (OSCE 2022b).

The withdrawal of the USA and of Russia from the Treaty on Open Skies in 2020 and in 2021 already implied fractures in the European security architecture. The failure of the OSCE Permanent Council to extend the mandate of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine is also a warning sign. On 10 May 2023, Russia's formal withdrawal from participation in the CFE Treaty was announced, which was assessed by analysts as yet another symbolic blow to European security, although it had "suspended" implementation since 2007 (Hernández 2023). Besides, Russia has terminated a bilateral agreement with Finland on 23 May 2023. The system of mutual military evaluation visits was operated under the Vienna Document 2011 adopted by the OSCE (Finland Abroad 2023). This may have a domino effect on conventional arms control in Europe (Jireš et al. 2013) if other countries in the region take the same course of action because there are 23 similar bilateral agreements in the OSCE region, the press release of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland adds. These developments may result in either a paralysis, or a complete transformation, or a collapse of the European security system.

Conclusions

As the initial post-Cold War enthusiasm has faded, and the European countries appear to have less commitment to the Charter of Paris principles (1990), the security architecture is fragmenting. The questions arise whether the OSCE will be able to adapt to changes and evolves further or it will return to a forum-like operation serving only as a place for mediation and negotiation between blocs in a divided world.

A study entitled "The Inhospitable Sea. Toward a New U.S. Strategy for the Black Sea Region" (Aronsson–Mankoff 2023: 21) states that the U.S. is developing a new politico-military strategy for the Black Sea Region, which assigns a greater role to the cooperation of NATO, the EU, the OSCE, the United States European Command (EUCOM) and the United States Central Command (CENTCOM). Such developments would probably cause a move towards a more military security related perspective in the region, which would not foster the soft power civilian approach by the OSCE in the future. However, there are views that the return to a CSCE-like forum and dialogue may be beneficial for exercising soft power by keeping Russia engaged with the OSCE and incentivising it

to co-operate (Cupać 2023: 75–80). In an era of renewing conflicts, operating the OSCE as a forum for communication and negotiations may prove crucial in the de-escalation of tensions in general.

The OSCE is interrelated with the other international organisations established in the prevalent world order and displays a number of parallelisms with them. For instance, the partnership policy of NATO, of the European Union and of the OSCE are remarkably similar. Even the regions in focus overlap: the Mediterranean for all, and a few Asian partners. OSCE Mediterranean partners are the following: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia. And its Asian partner countries are: Afghanistan, Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Thailand (OSCE s. a.d). Within this framework, the OSCE has opportunity to disseminate its comprehensive approach to security, to promote democratic values and human rights.

Additional evidence for the significant role of the OSCE is its co-operation in peacekeeping operations, especially in conflict prevention or peacebuilding, with other organisations (for instance, in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo). This role is founded on its unique capabilities to tackle civilian issues flexibly and efficiently. The achievements of the OSCE in fostering economic development and in promoting human rights are unquestionable, despite its recent forced withdrawal from Ukraine.

During its history, the CSCE and then OSCE has been a symbol of confidence building and co-operation. In the post-Cold War period it has proved that the collaboration and consensus of participating states can generate enough soft power to keep tensions and crises under control. The *OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century* (2003) forecasts the upheavals the world is faced with these days: an increasing number of intrastate and interstate conflicts and a growing threat of arms proliferation. If the OSCE retains its capabilities to adapt, it may be able to respond to new challenges and remains a valuable partner in maintaining and, in critical times, restoring international peace and security.

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