

An Overview on Different Dimensions of OSCE

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Abstract

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is the world's largest security-oriented intergovernmental organization. Its mandate includes issues such as arms control, promotion of human rights, freedom of the press, and fair elections. It employs around 3,460 people, mostly in its field operations but also in its secretariat in Vienna, Austria and its institutions. It has its origins in the 1975 Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) held in Helsinki, Finland.

Keywords: Combating Trafficking; OSCE Structure; Dimensions; Democratization; Education; Media Freedom; Minority Rights.

1. Introduction

The OSCE is concerned with early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation. Its 57 participating states are located in Europe, northern and central Asia, and North America. The participating states cover much of the land area of the Northern Hemisphere. It was created during the Cold War era as an East–West forum.

2. History

Helmut Schmidt, Erich Honaker, Gerald Ford and Bruno Kreisky at the 1975 CSCE summit in Helsinki, Finland.

The Organization has its roots in the 1973 Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). Talks had been mooted about a European security grouping since the 1950s but the Cold War prevented any substantial progress until the talks at Dipoli in Espoo began in November 1972. These talks were held at the suggestion of the Soviet Union which wished to use the talks to maintain its control over the communist countries in Eastern Europe, and President of Finland Urho Kekkonen hosted them in order to bolster his policy of neutrality. Western Europe, however, saw these talks as a way to reduce the tension in the region, furthering economic cooperation and obtaining humanitarian improvements for the populations of the Communist bloc.

The recommendations of the talks, in the form of "The Blue Book", gave the practical foundations for a three-stage conference called the "Helsinki process". The CSCE opened in Helsinki on 3 July 1973 with 35 states sending representatives. Stage I only took five days to agree to follow the Blue Book. Stage II was the main working phase and was conducted in Geneva from 18 September 1973 until 21 July 1975. The result of Stage II was the Helsinki Final Act which was signed by the 35 participating states during Stage III, which took place in Finland Hall from 30 July – 1 August 1975. It was opened by Holy See's diplomat Cardinal Agostino Casserole, who was chairman of the conference.

The concepts of improving relations and implementing the act were developed over a series of follow-up meetings, with major gatherings in Belgrade (4 October 1977 – 8 March 1978), Madrid (11 November 1980 – 9 September 1983) and Vienna (4 November 1986 – 19 January 1989).

The collapse of the Soviet Union required a change of role for the CSCE. The Charter of Paris for a New Europe, signed on 21 November 1990, marked the beginning of this change. With the changes capped by the renaming of the CSCE to the OSCE on 1 January 1995, in accord with the results of the conference held in Budapest, Hungary, in 1994. The OSCE now had a formal secretariat, Senior Council, Parliamentary

Assembly, Conflict Prevention Centre, and Office for Free Elections (later becoming the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights).

In December 1996, the "Lisbon Declaration on a Common and Comprehensive Security Model for Europe for the Twenty-First Century" affirmed the universal and indivisible nature of security on the European continent.

In Istanbul on 19 November 1999, the OSCE ended a two-day summit by calling for a political settlement in Chechnya and adopting a Charter for European Security. According to then Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Ivanov, this summit marked a turning point in Russian perception of the OSCE, from an organization that expressed Europe's collective will, to an organization that serves as a Western tool for "forced democratization".

3. Legal Status

A unique aspect of the OSCE is the non-binding status of its constitutive charter. Rather than being a formal treaty ratified by national legislatures, the Helsinki Final Act represents a political commitment by the heads of government of all signatories to build security and cooperation in Europe on the basis of its provisions. This allows the OSCE to remain a flexible process for the evolution of improved cooperation, which avoids disputes and/or sanctions over implementation. By agreeing to these commitments, signatories for the first time accepted that treatment of citizens within their borders was also a matter of legitimate international concern. This open process of the OSCE is often given credit for helping build democracy in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, thus leading to the end of the Cold War. Unlike most international intergovernmental organizations, however, the OSCE does not have international legal personality on account of the lack of legal effect of its charter. As a result, its headquarters' host, Austria, had to confer legal personality on the organization in order to be able to sign a legal agreement regarding its presence in Vienna.

4. Structure and Institutions

Political direction to the organization is given by heads of state or government during summits. Summits are not regular or scheduled but held as needed. The last summit took place in Astana (Kazakhstan), on 1 and 2 December 2010. The high-level decision-making body of the organization is the Ministerial Council, which meets at the end of every year. At ambassadorial level the Permanent Council convenes weekly in Vienna and serves as the regular negotiating and decision-making body. The chairperson of the Permanent Council is the ambassador to the Organization of the participating State which holds the chairmanship. From 1

January 2017 to 31 December 2017 the Chairperson-in-Office is Austrian Foreign Minister, Sebastian Kurz, who succeeded German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Stein Meier.

In addition to the Ministerial Council and Permanent Council, the Forum for Security Co-operation is also an OSCE decision-making body. It deals predominantly with matters of military co-operation, such as modalities for inspections according to the Vienna Document of 1999.

The OSCE's Secretariat is located in Vienna, Austria. The current Secretary General is Thomas Grainger of Switzerland, who took over from Lambert Zanier of Italy. The organization also has offices in Copenhagen, Geneva, The Hague, Prague and Warsaw.

A meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council at the Homburg in Vienna, Austria.

As of March 2016, the OSCE employed 3,462 staff, including 513 in its secretariat and institutions and 2,949 in its 17 field operations.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe is made up of 323 parliamentarians from 57 member states. The Parliamentary Assembly performs its functions mainly via the Standing Committee, the Bureau, and 3 General Committees (Committee on Political Affairs and Security, Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment, and Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions). The Parliamentary Assembly passes resolutions on matters such as political and security affairs, economic and environmental issues, and democracy and human rights. Representing the collective voice of OSCE parliamentarians, these resolutions and recommendations are meant to ensure that all participating states live up to their OSCE commitments. The Parliamentary Assembly also engages in parliamentary diplomacy, and has an extensive election observation program.

The oldest OSCE institution is the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), established in 1991 following a decision made at the 1990 Summit of Paris. It is based in Warsaw, Poland, and is active throughout the OSCE area in the fields of election observation, democratic development, human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination, rule of law, and Roma and Sinti issues. The ODIHR has observed over 300 elections and referendums since 1995, sending more than 50,000 observers. It has operated outside its own area twice, sending a team that offered technical support to the 9 October 2004 presidential elections in Afghanistan, an OSCE Partner for Co-operation, and an election support team to assist with parliamentary and provincial council elections on 18 September 2005. ODIHR is headed by Michael Georg Link.

The Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, established in December 1997, acts as a watchdog to provide early warning on violations of freedom of expression in OSCE participating States. The

representative also assists participating States by advocating and promoting full compliance with OSCE norms, principles and commitments regarding freedom of expression and free media. As of 2011, the current representative is expert in media law from Bosnia and Herzegovina Dunja Mijatovic.

The High Commissioner on National Minorities was created on 8 July 1992 by the Helsinki Summit Meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. It is charged with identifying and seeking early resolution of ethnic tension that might endanger peace, stability or friendly relations between participating states.

Each year the OSCE holds an OSCE Asian Conference with partner nations (currently Australia, Thailand, South Korea, Japan and Afghanistan).

5. The Three Dimensions

5.1. Politico-Military Dimension (First Dimension)

The OSCE takes a comprehensive approach to the politico-military dimension of security, which includes a number of commitments by participating States and mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution. The organization also seeks to enhance military security by promoting greater openness, transparency and co-operation.

5.1.1 Arms Control

The end of the Cold War resulted in a huge amount of surplus weapons becoming available in what is known as the international grey market for weapons. The OSCE helps to stop the - often illegal - spread of such weapons and offers assistance with their destruction. The OSCE hosts the annual exchange of information under the Conventional Forces in Europe treaty. The OSCE has also implemented two additional exchanges of information, the Vienna Document and the Global Exchange of Military Information. The Open Skies Consultative Commission, the implementing body for the Treaty on Open Skies, meets monthly at its Vienna headquarters.

5.1.2. Border Management

The actions taken by the OSCE in border monitoring range from conflict prevention to post-conflict management, capacity building and institutional support.

5.1.3. Combating Terrorism

With its expertise in conflict prevention, crisis management and early warning, the OSCE contributes to worldwide efforts in combating terrorism.

5.1.4. Conflict Prevention

The OSCE works to prevent conflicts from arising and to facilitate lasting comprehensive political settlements for existing conflicts. It also helps with the process of rehabilitation in post-conflict areas.

5.1.5. Military Reform

The OSCE's Forum for Security Co-operation provides a framework for political dialogue on military reform, while practical activities are conducted by field operations, as well as the Conflict Prevention Centre.

5.1.6. Policing

OSCE police operations are an integral part of the organization's efforts in conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation.

5.1.7. Implementation

The OSCE was a rather small organization until selection by the international community to provide electoral organization to post war Bosnia and Herzegovina in early 1996. Ambassador Frowick was the first OSCE representative to initiate national election in September 1996, human rights issues and rule of law specifically designed to provide a foundation for judicial organization within Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The OSCE had regional offices and field offices, to include the office in Brcko in northeastern Bosnia and Herzegovina which remained in limbo until the Brcko Arbitration Agreement could be decided, finalized and implemented.

The OSCE essentially took the place of the United Nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina in part because the Bosnian leadership felt deep contempt for the UN efforts to stop the war which began in 1991 and ended in 1995. During the time the United Nations were attempting a political solution, thousands of UN troops were posted in and around Bosnia and Herzegovina with special emphasis on Sarajevo. Between the inclusive dates of 1991 through 1995, over 200,000 Bosnians were killed and over one million displaced and another million as refugees. Citation needed

The OSCE continues to have a presence and a number of initiatives to bring a sustained peace to the region.

5.2. *Economic and Environmental Dimension (Second Dimension)*

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Activities in the economic and environmental dimension include the monitoring of developments related to economic and environmental security in OSCE participating States, with the aim of alerting them to any threat of conflict; assisting States in the creation of economic and environmental policies, legislation and institutions to promote security in the OSCE region.

5.2.1. Economic Activities

Among the economic activities of the OSCE feature activities related to migration management, transport and energy security. Most activities are implemented in co-operation with partner organizations.

5.2.2. Environmental Activities

The OSCE has developed a range of activities in the environmental sphere aimed at addressing ecologic threats to security in its participating States. Among the activities feature projects in the area of hazardous waste, water management and access to information under the Aarhus Convention.

5.3. *Human Dimension (Third Dimension)*

The commitments made by OSCE participating States in the human dimension aim to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; to abide by the rule of law; to promote the principles of democracy by building, strengthening and protecting democratic institutions; and to promote tolerance throughout the OSCE region.

6. Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

Since 2003 the OSCE has had an established mechanism for combating trafficking in human beings, as defined by Article 3 of the Palermo Protocol, which is aimed at raising public awareness of the problem and building the political will within participating states to tackle it effectively.

The OSCE actions against trafficking in human beings are coordinated by the Office of the Special Representative and Co-coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, a judge in the Criminal Court of Rome, took Office as the Special Representative in March 2010. From 2006 to 2009 this Office was held by Eva Biaudet, a former Finnish Minister of Health and Social Services. Biaudet currently serves as Finnish Ombudsman for Minorities. Her predecessor was former Austrian

Minister Helga Conrad, who served as the first OSCE Special Representative for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

The activities around Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the OSCE Region of the Office of the Special Representative include:

- 1) Co-operation with governments, helping them to accept and act on their responsibilities for curbing trafficking in human beings;
- 2) Providing governments with decision and policy-making aids and offering guidance on anti-trafficking management, with the aim of arriving at solutions tailored to the needs of the individual countries and in line with international standards;
- 3) Assisting governments to develop the national anti-trafficking structures required for efficient internal and transnational co-operation;
- 4) Raising awareness to draw attention to the complexity of the problem and to the need for comprehensive solutions;

Considering all dimensions of human trafficking, namely trafficking for sexual exploitation, trafficking for forced and bonded labor, including domestic servitude, trafficking into forced marriages, trafficking in organs and trafficking in children;

Ensuring the effective interaction of all agents and stake holders involved in the fight against human trafficking, ranging from governmental authorities, law enforcement officials to NGOs, and—last but not least—international organizations, as the agencies providing support thorough expertise and know-how;

Guaranteeing the highest possible visibility of the OSCE's fight against human trafficking to focus attention on the issue.

7. Democratization

The OSCE claims to promote democracy and assist the participating states in building democratic institutions.

8. Education

Education programs are an integral part of the organization's efforts in conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation.

9. Elections

As part of its democratization activities, the OSCE carries out election assistance projects in the run-up to, during, and following elections. However, the effectiveness of such assistance is arguable—Kazakhstan, for example, despite being the former chair of the OSCE, is considered by many to be one of the least

democratic countries in the world. Moreover, the recent democratic advances made in other Central Asian republics, notably Kyrgyzstan, have led to rumors of Soviet-style disruption of the Kyrgyz democratic process by, in particular, Kazakhstan and Russia. This may be in large part due to fears over the long-term stability of these countries own quasi-dictatorships.

10. Gender Equality

The equality of men and women is an integral part of sustainable democracy. The OSCE aims to provide equal opportunities for men and women and to integrate gender equality in policies and practices.

11. Human Rights

The OSCE's human rights activities focus on such priorities as freedom of movement and religion, preventing torture and trafficking in persons.

12. National and International NGOs

OSCE could grant consultive status to NGOs and INGOs in the form of "Researcher-in-residence program" (run by the Prague Office of the OSCE Secretariat): accredited representatives of national and international NGOs are granted access to all records and to numerous topical compilations related to OSCE field activities.

13. Media Freedom

The OSCE observes relevant media developments in its participating states with a view to addressing and providing early warning on violations of freedom of expression.

14. Minority Rights

Ethnic conflict is one of the main sources of large-scale violence in Europe today. The OSCE's approach is to identify and to seek early resolution of ethnic tensions, and to set standards for the rights of persons belonging to minority groups and High Commissioner on National Minorities has been established.

15. OSCE Democracy Defender Award

The Democracy Defender Award honors a person or group for contributions to the promotion of democracy and the defense of human rights "in the spirit of Helsinki Final Act and other OSCE principles and commitments." The award was established in 2016 on the initiative of Ambassadors of 8 countries, and supported by the delegations of the 18 countries of the OSCE (22 countries in 2017).

16. Criticism

Following an unprecedented period of activity in the 1990s and early 2000s (decade), the OSCE has in the past few years faced accusations from the CIS states (primarily Russia) of being a tool for the Western states to advance their own interests. For instance, the events in Ukraine in 2004 (the "Orange Revolution") led to allegations by Russia of OSCE involvement on behalf of the pro-Western Viktor Yushchenko. At the 2007 Munich Conference on Security Policy, Vladimir Putin made this position very clear:

"They [unnamed Western States] are trying to transform the OSCE into a vulgar instrument designed to promote the foreign policy interests of one or a group of countries. And this task is also being accomplished by the OSCE's bureaucratic apparatus, which is absolutely not connected with the state founders in any way. Decision-making procedures and the involvement of so-called non-governmental organizations are tailored for this task. These organizations are formally independent but they are purposefully financed and therefore under control".

Russia and its allies are advancing the concept of a comprehensive OSCE reform, which would make the Secretariat, institutions and field presences more centralized and accountable to collective consensus-based bodies and focus the work of the Organization on topical security issues (human trafficking, terrorism, non-proliferation, arms control, etc.), at the expense of the "Human Dimension", or human rights issues. The move to reduce the autonomy of the theoretically independent OSCE institutions, such as ODIHR, would effectively grant a Russian veto over any OSCE activity. Western participating States are opposing this process, which they see as an attempt to prevent the OSCE from carrying out its democratization agenda in post-Soviet countries.

Following the 2008 U.S. presidential election, OSCE's ODIHR was accused of having double standards by Russia's lawmaker Slutsky. The point was made that while numerous violations of the voting process were registered, its criticism came only from within the United States (media, human rights organizations, McCain's election staff), while the OSCE known for its bashing criticism of elections on the post-Soviet space remained silent.

17. OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

In 2004 the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly sent election observers to the U.S. Presidential elections. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's president at the time was Democratic Congressman Alcee Hastings. Hastings had previously been impeached for corruption by the U.S. Congress. The OSCE faced criticism of

partisanship and double standards due to Hastings's past and the fact that the OSCE's mandate was to promote democracy and the values of civil society.

In 2010 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe was criticized from within by the Latvian delegation for lacking transparency and democracy. Spencer Oliver (b. 1938) secretary general of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, who has held the post since the organization's inception in 1992, faced a challenge from the Latvian Artis Pabriks. According to the rules of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly the incumbent general secretary can only be replaced with a full consensus minus one. Pabriks called the rules "quite shocking from the perspective of an organization that's monitoring elections".

18. 2012 Texas Controversy

Before the U.S. presidential elections of November 2012, the OSCE announced its intention to send electoral observers to Texas and to other U.S. states. This prompted the Attorney General of Texas Greg Abbott to send letters to U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and to the OSCE, threatening to arrest OSCE officials if they should enter electoral premises in Texas and break Texas law. In reply, the U.S. Department of State stated that OSCE observers enjoyed immunities. In the event, no incidents between OSCE and Texas authorities were recorded during the elections.

19. OSCE SMM Monitoring the Movement of Heavy Weaponry in Eastern Ukraine

The organization has been criticized by the Ukrainian press and government for actions during the Russian–Ukraine conflict. During the War in Donbass, an OSCE observer allowed Russian separatists to use the organization's marked vehicle, which prompted the belief that the OSCE was biased in the war and not interested in carrying out its duties of mediating a ceasefire. The organization issued a statement regretting the incident.

The organization has also been criticized by Ukraine for allegedly failing to monitor the implementation of the Minsk Protocol. The agreement called for a creation of a 40 km buffer zone, but upon Ukrainian forces withdrawing from their 20 km portion of the buffer, Russian separatists are said to have simply occupied the abandoned territory without withdrawing from their own 20 km buffer. Likewise, there are allegations of separatists using OSCE marked vehicles for transportation. Moreover, the mission also received criticism alleging that only 2 checkpoints on the Russian–Ukrainian border are currently being monitored, which has been described as "seriously inadequate" by Daniel Baerm the US ambassador to the OSCE.

On the other hand, Ukraine has faced criticism following a BBC report showing an alleged violation of the Minsk agreement when Ukraine stationed tanks in the residential neighborhood Avdeevka. The mission has also been criticized for waiting months to deploy drones to help monitor the border as well as withdrawing them after only several weeks of use due to Russian electronic attacks. Ukraine has argued that approximately 80% of the OSCE observers located near Mariupol were Russian citizens and many had ties to Russian security agencies such as the FSB and GRU. The organization has also been accused of allegedly revealing the locations of Ukrainian troops to Russian forces during the conflict and that Russian OSCE observers may be directly coordinating separatist artillery strikes on Ukrainian positions.

On 1 December 2014, an OSCE observer was injured by Ukrainian counter artillery fire while observing militants firing at Ukrainian forces. The OSCE team was located next to two pro-Russian mortar teams. The OSCE team did not radio in or record the Russian mortar team firing on Ukrainian positions. Critics stated that the unorthodox behavior of being located next to an active separatist artillery position and not reporting the incident showed that the OSCE team was not acting in an impartial manner.

On 27 October 2015 a suspended OSCE monitor confirmed he was a former employee of Russia's Main Intelligence Directorate. The suspended SMM stated he had no trouble receiving the position and neither the OSCE nor Ukraine's Security Service thoroughly checked his background. Following the report the OSCE issued a comment stating the monitor has been fired due to violations of the organization's code of conduct. On 6 April 2016 photos of OSCE monitors attending the wedding of a Russian separatist were found. The wedding was hosted in June 2015. The OSCE expressed regret over the incident, issuing a statement saying "The unprofessional behavior displayed by the monitors in the picture is an individual incident that should not be abused to cast a shadow on the reputation of other mission members." The OSCE reported that the monitors were no longer with the OSCE special monitoring mission.

In April 2017 an OSCE vehicle struck a mine, killing one member and injuring two. Two armored vehicles were on patrol near Luhansk when one struck the mine. The dead man was American while the injured woman was from Germany and the other person was from the Czech Republic.

On 18 July 2018 it was revealed that Russian intelligence services received inside information about the activities of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine from a staff member of the OSCE. The insider information consisted of observer's preference to alcohol, women, their financial situation, and their contacts in Ukraine. The OSCE issued a statement expressing concern over the alleged security breach.

20. Turkey

In April 2017, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan criticized the OSCE for reporting that opposition "No" campaigners in the Turkish constitutional referendum had faced bans, police interventions and arrests. Erdoğan said: "Now the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe says if the result is 'yes', that means there are a lot of problems. Who are you? First of all, you should know your place. This is not your duty."

In February 2018, OSCE has criticized the Turkish government over the detention of social media users for criticizing the Turkish invasion of northern Syria.

21. Conclusion

Through its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE observes and assesses elections in its member states, in order to support fair and transparent democratic processes, in keeping with the mutual standards to which the organization is committed; between 1994 and 2004 the OSCE sent teams of observers to monitor more than 150 elections, typically focusing on elections in emerging democracies. In 2004, at the invitation of the United States Government, the ODIHR deployed an assessment mission, made up of participants from six OSCE member states, which observed that year's US presidential election and produced a report. It was the first time that a US presidential election was the subject of OSCE monitoring, although the organization had previously monitored state-level American elections in Florida and California, in 2002 and 2003. The 2004 assessment took place against the backdrop of the controversial recount effort in the 2000 US presidential election, and came about largely through the initiative of 13 Democratic members of the United States House of Representatives. That group, which included Barbara Lee, of California, and Eddie Bernice Johnson, of Texas, initially addressed a request for election observers to the United Nations, in a letter to Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General, but the request was declined. Subsequently, the administration of President George W. Bush, through the State Department, headed by Secretary of State Colin Powell, responded to the lawmakers' concerns by inviting the OSCE election-monitoring mission.

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