

## Towards Democratization - Small Countries Within the European Security System\*

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The 20th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, and the nearing end of the century, offer additional motivation to assess the current state of international relations in the light of the overall achievements of the 20th century. In this context, it is of particular interest to examine the contribution of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe to international peace and security, as well as the prospects of the OSCE in the coming century.

At the very outset, I would like to make clear that I will be looking at these issues from the unique perspective of smaller states, which are traditionally considered as objects of decisions, as opposed to the big powers, acting as policy makers in international affairs. Admittedly, this imposed division of labour does not apply entirely to the OSCE proper, the only international, security-oriented organisation fully based on a consensual decision-making process.

Obviously, the biggest responsibility for the half-a-century-old network of international organisations, including the institutionalised systems of European security, lies with the big powers - the victorious Allies of World War II. In creating of this complex politico-military system, neither Croatian, nor any other small power has participated to any significant extent. Later on, during the Cold War period, smaller states had the cruel choice: to accept second-rate membership in one or another military bloc, or to remain out in the cold, i.e. to rely on their own limited diplomatic, economic and defence skills and resources.

Since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Communist system in the Western hemisphere, the international position of the small states has significantly changed.

Within the OSCE, for instance, small, and/or newly emerged participating states, including those which do not take part in any of the existing defence arrangements, can engage in the international political dialogue and influence the decision-making process, on a rather equal

footing. Indeed, for many smaller participating states (which make up a clear majority of the OSCE membership), Croatia included, the Permanent Council and other OSCE organs and working groups are the only international fora where they are able to take the floor literally on a daily basis and be listened to as an equal partner!

This is particularly important in this very moment when the national security and territorial integrity of these smaller, uncommitted and newly emerged member-states is being threatened by foreign powers, mostly by fomenting internal rebellion and by using ethnic minorities as "Trojan horses" for aggression.

Unfortunately, when a smaller uncommitted and newly emerged member-state, prompted by this unbearable situation, attempts to set in motion some of the mechanisms and instruments provided for within the OSCE, specially those which might involve anything more than lip-service to lofty principles and empty diplomatic rhetorics, then comes the moment of truth! At this point, small, uncommitted, and newly emerged member-states of the OSCE have to repeatedly learn the old truth, so typical for all the egalitarian structures: where all are equal, some are more equal!

It is obvious that national security, political sovereignty and territorial integrity cannot be defended by empty rhetoric, neither does the equality of the modern world mean only the right to speak up regularly in international fora. From the point of view of the uncommitted, smaller and/or recently admitted member-states, true equality includes a realistic expectation that the OSCE would not allow any threat to the national security, sovereignty and integrity of any of its democratic, fully-fledged members.

From my informal consultations with colleagues from the other small, uncommitted and recently emerged member-states, especially those directly threatened or victimized by aggression, I could derive our common expectation, indeed, our demand for equality in security for all member-states - irrespective of their area population, economic or military power. This equality in security will mean prompt and resolute action by the OSCE and/or other international organisations and institutions, along the lines of the principle: One for all, all for one!

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If what has been said just now remains unheard, I strongly believe that the OSCE has no future and that the entire international community is heading towards disaster!

That is why, at this particular historical junction, it is critically important for the voice of smaller, uncommitted and recently admitted states to gain better hearing within the CSCE. Yes, the fact is that, in this moment the sovereignty and territorial integrity of only these member-states is threatened.

However, it should be borne in mind that not only if the notorious spillover effect occurs, but also if any of the threatened member-states succumb to aggression and disappear, a horrendous precedent will be set, which will - once again in history - put into motion the vicious circle of wars, military alliances, regional and global divisions! This terrible perspective should induce the true policy makers within the OSCE region to pay more attention to views and analyses of the smaller, uncommitted and newly emerged member-states, and to factor them in when the new model of the European security is to be elaborated.

If one attempts to identify the most important social and political developments in contemporary history, one has to admit that, despite all tragedies and illusions of the 20th century, it was characterised by a steady advance of democratic values and institutions. Five years before the new centennial begins, free elections and free press, parliamentary democracy and the rule of law, human rights and protection of minorities are not only values confined to the West alone, but are indisputable political goals to which governments and political parties in the post-Communist world and, indeed, in all continents, are subscribing without hesitation. The OSCE can proudly claim, that it was its founding document, twenty years ago, which, by defining the way states are obliged to treat their citizens, inspired dissidents and citizen groups to fight for change, and finally to overthrow totalitarian rule. However, at the same time, it has to be stressed that individual martyrs and democratic dissidents, or isolated human rights groups, would have never been able to bring about democracy. It has to be admitted, its victory was facilitated by another political process - that of national emancipation and formation of modern nation-states. Indeed, from only 50 or so independent nation-states 50 years ago, today the number of the United Nations member-states has risen to 186.

Despite all the historical blame that could be attributed to nationalism, it has to be recognized that only its formidable political energy was able to crush down the two most powerful systems of political domination of our era: imperialist colonialism and the multinational Communist empire!

Both of them were not only a constant threat to the world peace and stability, but also the basic obstacle to the global spread of democratic values and institutions.

National self-consciousness - the same one which built first democracies in the 18th and 19th centuries - was decisive again, in the second half of the 20th century, for the emergence of dozens of new democratically-oriented states and governments throughout the world.

The OSCE region, particularly the liberated and/or recently admitted member-states, which emerged from the ruins of the multinational Communist empires, offer a more congenial political and institutional environment for the development of democratic values and institutions, as well as of a sound national economy, based on free enterprise and integrated in the world market.

Unfortunately, due to a lack of democratic tradition, a hasty process of political liberalisation, as well as the cases of nationalistic instrumentalisation of masses, these countries have experienced a reemergence of aggressive nationalism, chauvinism and xenophobia. The most dangerous manifestations of nationalism today are renewed ambitions for Nazi-like territorial expansion and regional hegemonism. They surfaced particularly where the emergence of the new nation-states resulted from a change of borders, which brought many ethnic minorities into a new and, admittedly, difficult situation. Because of all this, post-Communist societies and recently admitted member-states bear the ultimate responsibility for wiping out nationalism and xenophobia, as well as for settling the still unresolved problems related to the status and legitimate expectations of national minorities. Only by doing so, as well as by speedily developing democratic institutions and values, will they be able to establish the rule of law and civic society, and also to contribute significantly to regional and global stability.

But, is it realistic to expect this process to be completed very soon in the existing circumstances of the present world? Does the responsibility for international peace really lie only with the 25 or so post-Communist and recently admitted member-states?

Indeed not! By the end of the 20th century, one might argue that the dream of the best minds of the Enlightenment is finally coming true, i.e. that democratic principles of the Contrat Social are prevailing in almost all nation-states. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the other dream of the Age of Enlightenment that of the "ewiger Frieden" (Eternal Peace) as Immanuel Kant put it in his famous philosophical sketch!

Admittedly, in sharp contrast to the principles governing political life within most of the existing nation-states, the international political scene, including the OSCE region, is still characterised by domination, force and, even, violence. Ironically enough, in the post-Cold War and post-Communist period, it seems that big powers have intensified their mutual feuding, while continuing to exert economic and political pressure, to proliferate conventional arms, even nuclear technology, and to instigate regional conflicts and proxy wars!



Such a military-political situation in international relations is not favourable for the internal democratisation of the post-Communist societies and recently admitted states. It is my firm belief that this process cannot be completed until international relations are also democratised! Moreover, one could argue that internal democratisation and the democratisation of international affairs is one and indivisible historical process. Neither one of these two facets of global democratisation is possible separately or in disregard of the other!

In this respect, however, the situation is far from promising. Instead of the emergence of the much famed New International Order, on the eve of the new millenium we are witnessing day by day more international tension, aggression and interference in internal affairs. It seems that nowadays only the 16 NATO member-states could consider themselves reasonably safe and protected by their alliance, while the other 170 nation-states are out in the cold, as one diplomat put it recently. Those among the latter group which are big and powerful enough, i.e. which dispose over nuclear arms and means for their delivery, should also consider their national security, sovereignty and territorial integrity almost invulnerable. However, for the greatest number of smaller, less developed and underarmed nation-states, the world they live in, as it was put recently by the German author Arnulf Baring: "...resembles more the constellations of the late 19th and early 20th centuries than its very end." The French philosopher Alain Bosc dares to go even further when he announces the emergence of the New Middle Ages.

The existing system of international organisations, including defense arrangements which served the needs of the post-World War Two balance of power, is now obsolete and needs fundamental restructuring. The same applies to the more recent Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Its establishment, 20 years ago, was prompted by the need of the international community to minimize the risks of the nuclear war and to foster transformation of the Cold War into peaceful coexistence among the two opposing blocs. Also, the famous Third basket of the Helsinki Document was intended to facilitate and speed up the process of political democratisation in the Eastern bloc. These objectives being grosso modo achieved, the OSCE is now struggling to find its new role in Europe which changed so dramatically in the tectonic 1989/1991 period.

It is my strong belief that, after contributing significantly to the internal democratisation of all of its member-states, the fundamental role of the OSCE in the forthcoming period is to contribute equally to the democratisation of international relations.

What does it mean: to democratise international relations? Basically, it means to adapt and introduce on the international political scene, the same democratic

values and criteria, even institutions, which are implemented in internal politics. In other words, governments and leaders should adopt the same rules of the political game and assume the same responsibilities both in internal policies and in foreign affairs!

The OSCE has been working hard in this direction from its very inception: even the primary requirement of the OSCE, directed to all member-states, to live in peace with their own population and with all their neighbours was based on tolerance as a fundamental element of democratic behaviour. In the ensuing 20 years, and particularly from the time of the Paris Charter onwards, the best results have been achieved in elaborating instruments and mechanisms by which internal democratic values and criteria were transferred to international relations.

However, preventive diplomacy with its conflict prevention instruments, conflict management and peace-keeping mechanisms, as well as instruments of selective punishment such as suspension from membership, imposing of sanctions and trade embargo, they all lack the one and same element - that of enforcement. In that respect, one has to admit that the OSCE and, indeed, the entire international community remain blocked and waver indecisively between the two concepts of international politics which are best explained by the German terms of *Moralpolitik* and *Machtpolitik*. Faced with the dramatic consequences of such indecisiveness, it becomes increasingly obvious that the dilemma between moral politics and power politics is a false one, and that it has to be rejected, since there is no rational reason why wrongdoings in international relations should not be sanctioned in the same way as similar wrongdoings within the nation-state.

At this point, one has to recall the words of Carl Popper, who identified the so-called Paradox of tolerance, according to which ultimate tolerance leads only to the annihilation of the tolerant ones, and with them, of the phenomenon of tolerance itself. That is why, in extreme situations, the tolerant ones have the right to use force in their defense, as well as in defence of tolerance itself!

Aggression and territorial expansion, ethnic cleansing and genocide, i.e. crimes against the international community and humanity have to be punished in the same way as crimes against individual persons, such as pillage, rape, or murder. Until such an attitude prevails and becomes regular practice in international relations, until the democratization replaces the current law of the jungle in international relations, the completion of internal democratisation of the post-Communist and recently admitted member-states of the OSCE, not to speak of the less developed countries in the Southern hemisphere, cannot be realistically expected.