

SMART STRATEGY FOR OSCE IN A CHANGING WORLD

“As we analyze our situation and our possibilities, there is no reason for complacency. But we must not be discouraged if in the short term we cannot find the right answers to the multitude of old and new challenges confronting us”[1]

Wilhelm Höynck, 1994

Our world is rapidly changing due to increasingly complex and contradictory processes that are having a significant influence on the dynamics and transformation of the international system. New centers of power are rising, the impact of the information revolution on mankind’s activities is growing dramatically, and regional integration processes are intensifying. Most of the traditional international security threats are still present, while new challenges to the world community are on the horizon.

In an era of growing “turbulence” [2] in world politics and amidst a global shift of influence from the West to the East, we are witnessing signs of “the return of geopolitics” [3] or “the revenge of geography” [4] that, to a large extent, collide not only with the ongoing processes of interdependence, but also with the principle of indivisible security. The latter is of pivotal importance for Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security that, amidst a growing confrontation between Russia and the West over the Ukraine crisis, has undergone a major test. However, we should admit that even before the Ukraine crisis, the architecture of Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security remained shaky and unstable. In this context, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as the most

comprehensive and inclusive international organization in the region, should reconsider its approach to building a security community in a changing world that is currently confronted with three fundamental and intertwined challenges.

A Triad of Challenges

1. Changing world order

After the dismantling of the bipolar international relations system, “*the end of history*” [5] was not realized and “*the unipolar moment*” [6] did not last long. But, the multipolar world order, contrary to the beliefs of many experts, has not yet emerged and is still in its formative stages. Moreover, the development of world order is unclear. Some scholars believe that the current world order is moving towards “*a new bipolarity*” [7], where the USA and China will be the key players in setting a global agenda. Others argue that we are entering “*a multiplex world*” [8], which is characterized by complex forms of interdependence among multiple key actors in the international system; or, alternatively, we are moving towards “*an age of entropy*” [9], where international politics transforms into a system far more erratic, unsettled and devoid of behavioral regularities.

2. International institutions are playing catch-up

“The Ukrainian crisis – and prior to that, the crisis in the Middle East – underscored the evanescence of many post-Cold war institutions” [10]. Such post-Cold War institutions are no longer able to guarantee international security. Meanwhile, states are lending little weight to international law and are increasingly willing to use force unilaterally to protect their individual interests. The latter is often the result of the great powers’ individual interpretation of international events (e.g. Yugoslavia, Iraq, Kosovo, Crimea) and their legal assessments of the new international norm R2P. Under such conditions where “double standards” are perceived not as abnormal or as amoral practice, but rather as “a guide to action”, the international security architecture, as well as global governance, are becoming more uncertain, vulnerable and fragile.

3. Intellectual crisis and divergent perceptions of strategic security challenges.

It increasingly appears that the traditional actors in world politics prefer a return to a Hobbesian understanding of the state of nature – “a war of all against all”. From this perspective, world politics appear clear and logical. Given the fact that attempts to negotiate strategic issues cooperatively are perceived as a weakness, quips like “the balance of power is dead, long live the balance of power” [11] are more prominent. Thereby, an inability or unwillingness to agree and follow a common set of rules only increases the level of instability in the international system.

The Roots of the Ukraine Crisis

Amidst these aforementioned challenges, the emergence of the Ukraine crisis appears to be the next in a logical sequence of events, rather than a set of extraordinary circumstances. The worsening of relations between Russia and the US, or between Russia and the West, over the last decade precipitated the current crisis. One of the key reasons for this development was “Russia’s new course towards changing the “rules of game” in terms of its relations with the West as of the 1990s, as well as the reluctance of the West – mainly the US – to accept this position” [12]. In practical terms, the Ukraine crisis is rooted mainly in a clash between Western institutions (NATO and the EU) and Russia’s projection of economic and political influence in the post-Soviet space, which remains full of internal problems.

The enlargement of the EU over the past two decades has demonstrated the success of the European project and its commitment to integrate the European continent. Moreover, Brussels began promoting the development of “a zone of prosperity” and the formation of “a ring of friends” [13], where the EU was supposed to play a leading role in relations with its neighbors, including post-Soviet countries. In this respect, the Eastern Partnership initiative sought to foster

relations with six former Soviet republics (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine). Moscow, for its part, saw this initiative as an attempt by the EU to expand its sphere of influence, given that Russia planned to promote its own integration project within the post-Soviet space – the Eurasian Union. Given its size relative to other European states and historic and cultural ties to Russia, Ukraine was a primary target for Moscow’s integration efforts. Russia believed that if Ukraine were to sign the Association Agreement with the EU, economic ties between Brussels and Kyiv would strengthen Ukraine’s pro-European or pro-Western course. For this reason, Moscow adamantly tried to postpone (or cancel) Ukraine’s signing of the Association Agreement with the EU and to pull Kyiv towards the Eurasian Union project.

NATO’s eastward expansion also concerned Moscow, especially after a wave of “color revolutions” occurred in some former Soviet republics, including Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004). The new political elites of Georgia and Ukraine began to push for integration into the West. When NATO members started to seriously consider Georgian and Ukrainian membership in NATO, coupled with Washington’s plans to deploy an anti-ballistic missile defense system in Europe, Moscow perceived such developments as a direct threat to its strategic security. Although during the 20th NATO Summit in Bucharest (April 2008) Kyiv and Tbilisi were not offered a Membership Action Plan (MAP), the Alliance’s promise to review the issue later did little to quell Moscow’s security concerns. In June 2008, Russia offered to develop a legally binding new European Security Treaty (Medvedev Initiative) that would shape “a new security architecture in Europe” [14]. Most Europeans reacted skeptically to the Russian initiative. Only a military conflict in the South Caucasus in August 2008 pushed the OSCE participating states to launch the Corfu Process (June 2009) that aimed “to restore confidence and take forward dialogue on wider European security” [15].

If the possibility of Georgia’s NATO membership had become a distant prospect after the 2008 military conflict, in the case of Ukraine the issue remained

unresolved. The situation changed after Viktor Yanukovich won the Ukrainian presidential elections in early 2010. In July of that year, the Ukrainian Parliament passed a law “On the basis of domestic and foreign policy of Ukraine” that proclaimed Ukraine as a non-aligned state. Despite the fact that under Yanukovich’s rule, Ukraine did not deviate from a pro-European path, the Ukrainian president “expressed interest” in Russia’s Eurasian Union project. Yanukovich’s decision to cancel or, more precisely, postpone signing the Association Agreement with the EU during the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius (28-29 November 2013), resulted in mass protests on *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* (Independence Square) in Kyiv.

The ensuing revolutionary events in February 2014 brought to power in Ukraine political leaders who were fully committed to Western integration. Under these circumstances, Russia, perhaps, understood that Ukraine would no longer join the Eurasian Union project, and Kyiv’s entrance into NATO was on the horizon. From this perspective, the Kharkiv Pact, which extended the presence of Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea until 2042, was threatened. Moreover, the steps taken by the new authorities in Kyiv towards a “Ukrainization” of the country were viewed as an open threat to ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in Ukraine by Moscow. Against this backdrop, Russia’s actions in Crimea and its position in eastern Ukraine have faced strong condemnation by the West. The resulting sanctions and confrontation between Russia and the West reinforces “Cold War thinking” and undermines Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security.

Experts are correct in stating that “the Ukraine crisis has exposed the ineffectiveness of existing institutions and security mechanisms in Europe (the NATO–Russia Council, the European Union institutions and the Council of Europe)” [16]. In this regard, OSCE appeared as not the most effective, but as the only multilateral platform where cooperative crisis management measures were discussed and adopted in an inclusive manner that could contribute significantly to the search for a political solution to the Ukraine crisis [17]. The Special

Monitoring Mission to Ukraine under the OSCE's auspices is evidence of this cooperation. The mission has helped to monitor and verify compliance by all parties with the Minsk agreements that were concluded in September 2014 (Minsk I) and February 2015 (Minsk II). The comprehensive and inclusive nature of the OSCE in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian regions allows the OSCE to further contribute to a political solution for the current crisis. However, the OSCE cannot be solely responsible for the effectiveness of this solution, especially when the OSCE participating states have different views of the situation. Moreover, the OSCE needs to revise its approach to building a security community as a whole. It seems that the OSCE can fill some gaps in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security issues through its application of SMART strategy, which includes the following postulates.

What is SMART Strategy?

Strategic vision

It is important for OSCE participating states to focus on a comprehensive discussion that concerns the development of practical agreements based on the principles reflected in key OSCE documents, including the Astana Commemorative Declaration, where parties recommitted themselves “to the vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok, rooted in agreed principles, shared commitments and common goals” [18]. Russia's suspension of its participation in a consulting group on the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) in March 2015 cannot be perceived as a positive development, but it fairly underscores the fact that the crisis has made compliance with such agreements no longer tolerable from Moscow's strategic perspective. Given the changing military-political situation in the Euro-Atlantic region and the modernization of the military capabilities of participating states in the OSCE, new

agreements are desperately needed. In this respect, new proposals should be based not on the tactical concerns of individual states, but rather on the strategic vision of all parties in building a security community.

Mutuality

It is important for the OSCE participating states to strictly comply with the mutuality principle in terms of the implementation of agreements within the OSCE framework. In this respect, compliance with the mutuality principle should be separated from attempts to impose additional conditions on individual participating states during the implementation of corresponding agreements. Recognizing the inadmissibility of a voluntary interpretation of the OSCE agreements, it is important to reach a common understanding of principles. It would be beneficial to reflect the mutuality principle in a concise Statute or Charter of the OSCE, the necessity of which has been argued by experts for many years [19].

Accountability

An improvement of accountability mechanisms in all three of the OSCE's "baskets" will increase the organization's openness and transparency. In terms of the first "basket" (security issues), it may be necessary to detail the Code of conduct on politico-military aspects of security, which was adopted at the 91st Plenary Meeting of the Special Committee of the CSCE Forum for Security Cooperation in Budapest (December 1994) [20]. To help develop openness and transparency in other OSCE areas, it is important to strengthen ties between the OSCE and civil society. By strengthening relations with corresponding non-governmental organizations in its region, the OSCE would significantly improve accountability in OSCE participating states.

Responsibility

The OSCE participating states should take responsibility for their strict adherence to the fundamental principles of the organization. It is not simply the political will of OSCE participating states to comply with agreements (although that is also true); it is an acceptance of responsibility for the possible consequences if OSCE participating states do not comply with agreements or purposefully distort them to fit their individual interests. From this perspective, it would be beneficial to work out a specific declaration within the OSCE framework that condemns the application of “double standards” as an abnormal or immoral practice and clarifies the responsibilities for the OSCE participating states toward actions that contradict the strategic vision on building a security community.

Trust

The improvement of trust-building mechanisms among participating states plays a crucial role not only in mitigating tensions among adversaries, but also in further reforming the OSCE and its adaptation to the realities of a changing world. This can be reached through deepened cooperation in areas that have proved to be least contentious and have had success in the past. This is true for the Treaty on Open Skies (OS). As experts note, against the background of the Ukraine crisis and increasing tensions between Russia and the West, the implementation of the OST has been largely unaffected, which seems to indicate that parties value the cooperative transparency created by the treaty [21].

The OSCE’s modernization and adaptation to new realities will not be a rapid and easy process, but the concentration of the OSCE participating states on fighting against common threats and challenges would give new life to the organization’s activities and incentivize the building of a new security community.

Bibliography

[1] Statement by the First OSCE Secretary General Wilhelm Höynck at the 49th session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, 15 November 1994 // Official website of OSCE. URL: <http://www.osce.org/sg/36951?download=true>

[2] Rosenau J. Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity.– Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

[3] Mead W. The Return of Geopolitics: The Revenge of the Revisionist Powers // Foreign Affairs, May/June 2014. URL: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141211/walter-russell-mead/the-return-of-geopolitics>

[4] Kaplan R. The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate. – New York: Random House, 2012.

[5] Fukuyama F. The End of History? // The National Interest, Summer 1989.

[6] Krauthammer Ch. The Unipolar Moment // Foreign Affairs, Vol. 70, No. 1, America and the World (1990/1991). P. 23-33.

[7] Dempsey J. The United States and China: The Return of a Bipolar World // Website of the European center of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 12, 2012. URL: <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=49969>

[8] Acharya A. From the Unipolar Moment to a Multiplex World // The Epoch Times, 16 July, 2014. URL: <http://printarchive.epochtimes.com/a1/en/us/nyc/2014/07-july/16/A17.pdf>

[9] Schweller R. The Age of Entropy: Why the New World Order Won't Be Orderly // Foreign Affairs, June 16, 2014. URL: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141568/randall-l-schweller/the-age-of-entropy>

[10] New rules or no rules? // XI Annual Valdai Discussion Club Meeting Participants' Report. – Moscow: March, 2015. P.3. URL: <http://valdaiclub.com/publication/75900.html>

[11] Pozdnyakov E.A. Russia in the Current System of International Relations, or “The Balance of Powers is Dead... - Long Live the Balance of Powers!” (Поздняков Э.А. Россия в системе современных международных отношений или: «Баланс сил умер... – да здравствует баланс сил!») // Official Website of the VIP-Premier Magazine. URL: <http://www.vip-premier.ru/userfiles/file/1-2012/26-33.pdf>

[12] Arbatov A., Dvorkin V., Oznobishchev S. and Pikaev A. NATO-Russia Relations (Prospects for New Security Architecture, Nuclear Reductions, CFE Treaty). – Moscow: IMEMO RAN, 2010. P. 10. URL: http://www.imemo.ru/files/File/en/publ/2010/10044_e.pdf

[13] Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours // Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Brussels, 11 March, 2003. URL: http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/pdf/com03_104_en.pdf

[14] Fedorov Yu. Medvedev's Initiative: A Trap for Europe? // Official website of the European Parliament. URL: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/d-ru/dv/d_ru_20100916_27/d_ru_20100916_27_en.pdf

[15] The Corfu Process // Official website of the OSCE. URL: <http://www.osce.org/cio/108343>

[16] Strengthening the OSCE. Building a Common Space for Economic and Humanitarian Cooperation, an Indivisible Security Community from the Atlantic to the Pacific / [A.V. Zagorski]; [I.S. Ivanov, Editor-in-Chief]; RIAC. — Moscow: Spetskniga, 2014. P. 4-10. URL: <http://russiancouncil.ru/common/upload/Report16en-OSCE.pdf>

[17] *Ibidem*

[18] Astana Commemorative Declaration: Towards a Security Community // OSCE Summit Meeting, Astana 2010. URL: <http://www.osce.org/cio/74985?download=true>

[19] See: Common purpose: Towards a More Effective OSCE // Final Report and Recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons On Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE, 27 June 2005. P. 19-20. URL: <http://www.osce.org/cio/15805?download=true> // Brander S. Legal Personality of the OSCE: Strong Pro Arguments (Брандер С. Правосубъектность ОБСЕ: убедительные доводы «за») // OSCE Magazine, March-April 2009. P. 18-22. URL: <http://www.osce.org/ru/secretariat/36187?download=true> etc.

[20] Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security // Adopted at the 91st Plenary Meeting of the Special Committee of the CSCE Forum for Security Co-operation in Budapest on 3 December 1994. URL: <http://www.osce.org/fsc/41355?download=true>

[21] Spitzer H. Open Skies: Transparency in Stormy Times // VERTIC, Trust & Verify, Issue № 146, July-September 2014. P. 2. URL: <http://www.vertic.org/media/assets/TV/TV146.pdf>